MACAULAY'S LIFE OF JOHNSON

LAUREL ENGLISH CLASSICS

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C. Bailey

SAMUEL JOHNSON

From the statue in St. Clement Danes Churchyard

MACAULAY'S
LIFE OF JOHNSON

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PREFACE

This edition, it is hoped, has two merits: it attempts to reach an intelligent mean between overediting and underediting, and it contains some convenient drudgery-saving devices for student and teacher. It has been the desire of the editor so to guide the student's approach to Macaulay's essay that the secondary purpose of the essayist—namely, to interest—may be made to no great extent subordinate to the primary purpose, to give information. As the critic Gosse is later quoted: "The most restive of juvenile minds, if induced to enter one of Macaulay's essays, is almost certain to appear at the end of it gratified and to an appreciable extent, cultivated." It is hoped that the introduction will quicken rather than deaden interest. As for the drudgery-saving aids in the appendix, it would surely be a work of supererogation to offer apologies for presenting devices easing and reducing endless school tasks.

S. L. G.

INTRODUCTION

THE ESSAY AS A FORM OF LITERATURE

Nearly 350 years ago — in 1580, to be exact — a French retired lawyer, Michel de Montaigne, gave to the world a small volume which, according to an eminent critic, Saintsbury, has been second in influence to hardly any of modern times. This little book was entitled simply *Essais*. Its sole object was to leave for his friends a mental portrait of the author, defects and all, and a record of his personal opinions and affairs. Its very title is accurately expressive of its tentative nature : it was composed of a series of short compositions, each a " trial, attempt, or endeavor," in no sense a finished production, or comprehensive in scope. The subjects covered were multitudinous and diverse, from *Friendship* to *Fleas*. To Montaigne is given the credit of being the father of the modern essay, for though there were many short prose compositions before his time, he first gave a name to the form and illustrated it by his own writing. His remarkable influence is due first of all to the ease and flexibility of his style. As Saintsbury says, " All the great prose writers of France could not fail to be influenced by the racy phrase, the quaint and picturesque vocabulary, and the unconstrained constructions of Montaigne." But the subject matter of his essays had even greater influence. The deftness of his ironic and yet humorous touch was altogether

§ 1. The origin of the essay

fresh. He is comparable only to Charles Lamb in the quaint felicity with which he treated human comedy. A certain grotesque and fantastic wisdom in his comments on mankind was both new and irresistible. The secret of his effectiveness lay in the personal touch ; he wrote subjectively. William Hazlitt, another nineteenth century English essayist who closely resembles him, says : " His greatest merit was that he may be said to have been the first who had the courage to say as an author what he felt as a man. . . . He was, in a word, the first author who was not a book-maker, and who wrote, not to make converts of others to established creeds and prejudices, but to satisfy his own mind of the truth of things. In this respect we know not which to be most charmed with, the author or the man." Subjectiveness of treatment, then, and picturesqueness of style along with a certain tentativeness and brevity were the four characteristics of the essay as Montaigne originated it.

§ 2. Development in England : two types

When the essay made its appearance in England about 1600, two of the characteristics so notable in Montaigne were missing. The essays in Bacon's first volume, published in 1597, were certainly concise and they were manifestly tentative, but they had not the easy, desultory, yet sparkling style of Montaigne, and more especially they lacked his delightful personal touch. This last deficiency, however, Bacon's successors in the seventeenth century supplied. Though they wrote mostly upon ethical and moral themes, they treated the themes from the subjective, the personal point of view. In the following century, Addison and Steele developed a different type, — the periodical essay, which dealt chiefly with manners and customs, politics and society. Though sprightly in style, this type was much less personal in touch. The nineteenth century

saw the perfecting of the personal essay of the seventeenth century as well as of the impersonal of the eighteenth. The two types came to be recognized and distinguished. Lamb, DeQuincey, and Stevenson wrote familiar essays like such well-known ones as *Roast Pig*, *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, and *Travels with a Donkey*. Macaulay, Carlyle, and Ruskin wrote formally on historical and critical themes. Both types have in common the two essential characteristics of an essay, brevity and tentativeness. They differ, however, in purpose and in point of view. The formal essay is written primarily to give information ; the familiar, to entertain. The formal essay is objective ; the author's personality is kept in the background. The familiar essay is subjective ; the author's personality is often the matter of chief interest. It is similar in this respect to the lyric poem.

§ 3. Classification according to subject matter

An attempt is often made further to classify essays according to subject matter. Such a classification can at best be only a rough one, because many can be classified, for instance, both as biographical and as critical, or as critical and historical. Yet there is some advantage in a classification according to subject matter : the student in the effort to make the classification is led to analyze the nature of the essay and the purpose of the essayist. Formal essays are most generally critical, biographical, or historical, though all of these kinds overlap. Familiar essays are most commonly humorous or satirical in subject matter, but essays on travel are also very common, such as those of Irving in *The Sketch Book*. Addison and Steele's *The Spectator* was satirical, poking kindly fun at the " fads, foibles, and follies " of Queen Anne's time. Charles Lamb's *Essays of Elia* are largely humorous, amusing us by his informal talks on roast pig, old china, and his sister Mary.

§ 4. Macaulay's essays on Johnson classified

In classifying Macaulay's two essays concerning Samuel Johnson, there is no difficulty about determining the type : both are formal. Though each shows to no small extent the influence of the author's personality, neither was written from the personal point of view. But a classification according to subject matter is not so easy. When one considers that the first essay was a review for a periodical of Croker's edition of Boswell's *Johnson*, one would naturally classify it as critical ; the other, a biography of Johnson written for the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, one would suppose to be biographical. Yet both give the facts in Johnson's life, and both interpret and estimate Johnson's work. The earlier essay does, it is true, contain more pages of criticism, especially of Croker and of Boswell ; yet the later one contains much sounder criticism. The fact is that each essay is both critical and biographical. Some critics try to avoid the difficulty by classifying both as literary essays. In the end, however, it makes little difference how we classify the essays, so long as we understand what the essayist is doing and how he does it.

§ 5. Method of studying essays

To study by analysis a familiar essay would be to spoil it, for its very purpose, to entertain or at least to interest the reader, would be defeated. Any school boy will bear witness that even the most exciting adventure story is spoiled forever by classroom analysis. A formal essay, however, is written with a different purpose — primarily, to give information ; secondarily, to interest. Sometimes the second purpose is in no way subordinate to the first, but in general it is considered as the means, and the imparting of information the end. Thus, Macaulay, the most journalistic of formal essayists, can have paid to him by a great modern critic, Gosse,

this famous compliment: "The most restive of juvenile minds, if induced to enter one of Macaulay's essays, is almost certain to reappear at the other end of it gratified, and to an appreciable extent, cultivated." It is possible with Macaulay's *Life of Johnson* simply to turn a student loose with the essay and allow him to get what he pleases from it — and if he reads it at all, he will get a great deal. But even a formal essay is so colored by the author's own experiences and outlook that a knowledge of his life is of very great value. Macaulay's essays, too, are so chock-full of allusions to history and literature, to political and educational institutions, to the life and times of the subject, that one's profit in reading is hugely increased by knowing beforehand something about these matters. Finally, one has a natural curiosity about the author's methods, the devices he uses to get a certain result — his style, in short; if this be understood, one's appreciation of the essay will be greatly increased. In order to enhance the student's appreciation and profit in the study of Macaulay's *Life of Johnson*, the following pages aim to present briefly a statement of the facts in the life of Macaulay, a description of his appearance and personality, an estimate of his position in literature and of his style, and a sketch of some matters of interest in the times of Doctor Johnson.

LIFE OF MACAULAY

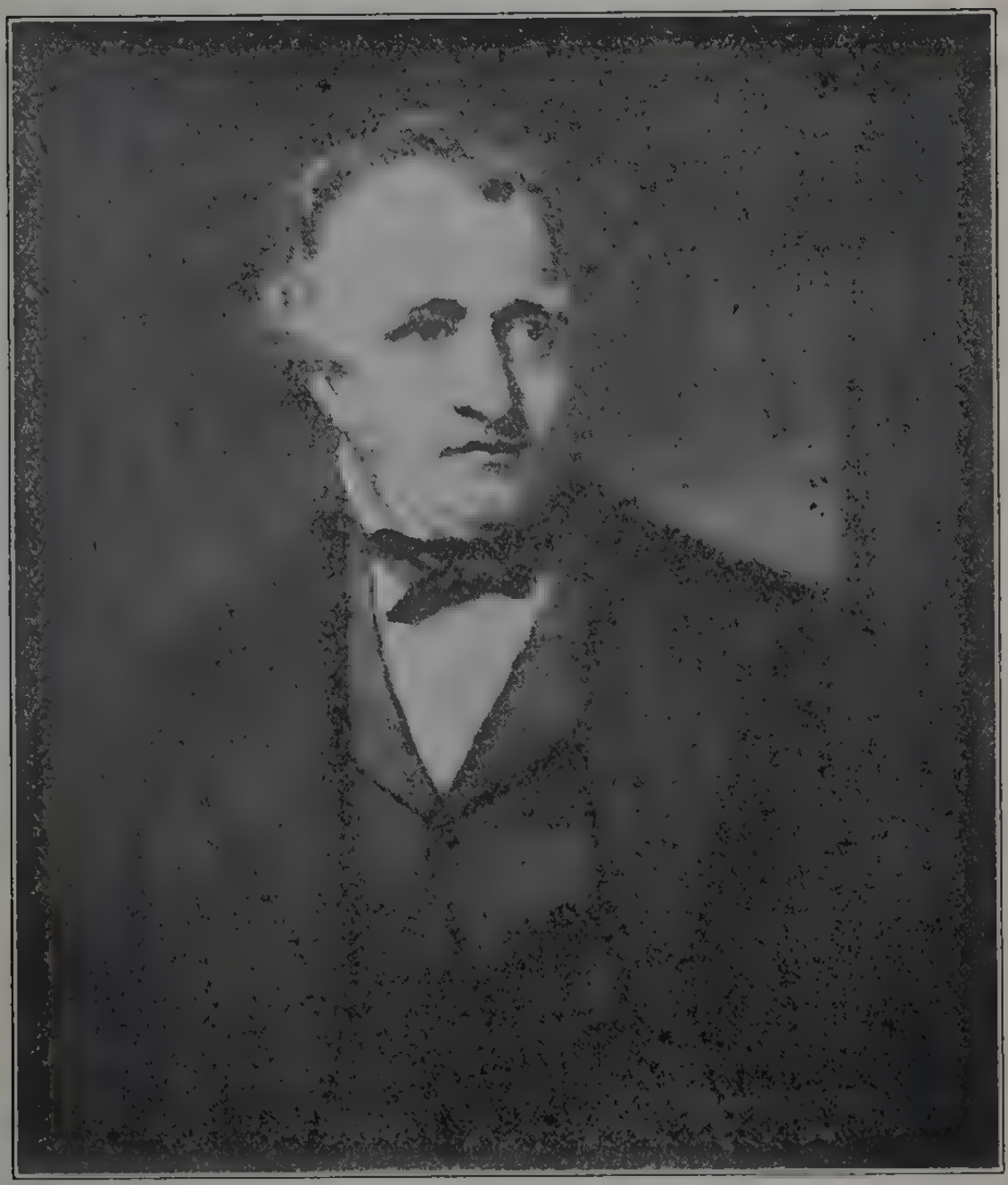
Macaulay's life and work may best be summed up in the statement that he was a typical Victorian. But there can not be applied to him that "dastardly epithet" *Mid-Victorian*, with its connotation of over-ornate architecture, mutton-chop whiskers, and wasp-like waists. For his life was spent before the good queen had be-

§ 6. Macaulay the Victorian

come so devoted to conventions and so dominated by the commonplace, if at times artificial, tastes of her husband that spontaneity was regarded as a crime. Even in Macaulay's day her reign had not the brilliance of Queen Elizabeth's. But the spirit of the age was much saner. It was a practical age, even a material one, an age of progress in arts and science alike, an age of honest efforts for reform in politics and social conditions. Macaulay, indefatigably industrious, highly successful as a writer of prose and of poetry, an orator and a historian of no mean ability, was typical of the best attributes of the early-Victorian age.

§ 7. His childhood distinguished by his precocity

Thomas Babington Macaulay was born October 25, 1800, at Rothley Temple, Leicestershire. His father, Zachary Macaulay, a good Scotch Presbyterian of an ancient family, had been governor of Sierra Leone, a West Africa Colony established as a home for liberated slaves. When in 1799 the colony began to prosper, Zachary returned to England and married Selina Mills, the daughter of a bookseller in Bristol, a member of the Society of Friends. To them a year later was born this son, one of the most precocious geniuses the world has ever known. His precocity startled everyone with whom he came in contact. His nephew and biographer, Trevelyan, tells a number of interesting details: "From the time that he was three years old he read incessantly, for the most part lying on the rug before the fire, with his book on the floor and a piece of bread-and-butter in his hand. . . . He did not care for toys, but was very fond of taking his walk, when he would hold forth to his companion, whether nurse or mother, telling interminable stories out of his own head, or repeating what he had been reading in language far above his years." When he was four years old, a servant spilled some hot coffee over his legs. "The hostess



LORD MACAULAY

was all kindness and compassion, and when, after a while, she asked how he was feeling, the little fellow looked up in her face, and replied, 'Thank you, madam, the agony is abated.'" Before he was eight, his literary achievements were prodigious; he anticipated H. G. Wells by writing a *Compendium of Universal History*; he so liked Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel* and *Marmion* that he memorized them; he wrote in a couple of days three cantos of one hundred and twenty lines each of a poem called *The Battle of Cheviot*; and he composed innumerable hymns — all this before he was eight.

§ 8. His early training

Fortunately for Macaulay, his exceptional gifts were most judiciously trained by his parents. They fostered his extraordinary ability without permitting him to parade it. They kept from him the knowledge that he was in any way superior to other children. As a result, he remained throughout his life remarkably free from vanity. They took pains, too, that he should not be spoiled by other older people. His mother encouraged him to visit Hannah More, a member of that famous coterie of literary women in Johnson's time known as the *Blue Stockings*. She was, according to Trevelyan, "the most affectionate and the wisest of friends, and readily undertook the superintendence of his studies, his pleasures, and his health. She would keep him with her for weeks, listening to him as he read prose by the ell, declaimed poetry by the hour, and discussed and compared his favorite heroes, ancient, modern, and fictitious . . . coaxing him into the garden under pretense of a lecture on botany; sending him from his books to run round the grounds, or play at cooking in the kitchen; giving him Bible lessons, which invariably ended in a theological argument, and following him with her advice and sympathy through his multifarious literary enterprises."

Fortunate indeed he was to have the influence of so wise a mentor.

When, in 1812, the boy had evidently outgrown the educational facilities of Clapham, his father contemplated sending him to the great London school of Westminster (called by the English a "public" school, though really similar to our preparatory schools), but for religious reasons finally settled upon a small private school kept by a low-church minister at Little Shelford, a village near Cambridge. Mr. Preston, the tutor, was a good scholar but narrow in his views. He succeeded in preparing his pupils so well that they got far beyond their share of honors at Cambridge and in after life; but he so crammed them with theology especially of a Calvinistic type that many, including young Tom, developed a lifelong hatred for the outward manifestations of religion. Macaulay remained at Mr. Preston's school for six years. During his last four years there, the boy read "widely, unceasingly, more than rapidly." He was accumulating even then that enormous store of information for which he has ever been famous. **§ 9. His school days**

This acquisitive process was continued throughout his six years at Trinity College, Cambridge, which he entered in 1818. He does not seem to have taken much pleasure in the regular college exercises, though he did them all conscientiously. He "detested manufacturing Greek and Latin verse in cold blood as an exercise." Moreover, he found scientific subjects and mathematics so distasteful to him that he neglected them utterly, a dangerous liberty at Cambridge. He nevertheless became a bachelor of arts in 1821, a master of arts and a fellow in 1824. He wrote the prize poems in 1819 and 1821, and won in 1824 a college prize for an essay on the character of William III. His Cambridge experience was the happiest of his **§ 10. College**

life : he enjoyed the intellectual companionship of very able minds ; he indulged his voracious appetite for reading, and incidentally he stored his extraordinary memory with an enormous amount of miscellaneous information.

§ 11. Macaulay's memory and reading faculty

The secret of Macaulay's immense store of information lay in a two-fold gift of nature : first of all, he was a voracious and an omnivorous reader, and a most rapid one, for he could take in a whole page at a glance ; secondly, his memory was prodigious - it almost beggars description. He was able to repeat Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel* after reading it through once. He said that if all the copies of *Paradise Lost* and *The Pilgrim's Progress* were destroyed, he could reproduce the whole of both. As a child, whatever pleased him, he remembered without consciously memorizing it. As he grew older, he no longer remembered involuntarily, but he was always able to memorize with the greatest ease. Nor did he ever lose his extraordinary faculty of assimilating printed matter at first sight. "He always read faster than other people skimmed, and this rapidity was not attained at the expense of accuracy."

Macaulay's exceptional ability might have won for him eminence in the profession he first chose, the law.

§ 12. His early writings

He was called to the bar in 1826, but he found legal technicalities not to his liking ; he spent most of his time in literary pursuits or in listening to the debates in the House of Commons. As Trevelyan put it, "Throughout life he never really applied himself seriously to any pursuit that was against the grain." Clients he had none, but by practising some economy he was able to live comfortably on his fellowship. His ambition was divided at the time between literature and politics. While he was at Cambridge, a very brilliant set of young men, who had been on the staff of the *Etonian*, started a quarterly maga-

zine with the support of Mr. Charles Knight, an enterprising publisher. Macaulay, though not of the group, was one of the chief contributors, much to the displeasure of his father, who did not approve of Knight's *Quarterly Magazine* at all. In 1825 occurred an event that gained for him real prominence. He published in the renowned *Edinburgh Review* an *Essay on Milton*. Young Macaulay, like Lord Byron, awoke one morning to find himself famous. The pleasure of the public was all the greater in that the essay furnished a welcome relief from Dr. Johnson's *Life of Milton*, which was really a libel upon the great poet. Everybody read and admired the essay because the style was so new and so interesting. The article is, it must be confessed, more notable for its style than for its critical accuracy; though as a picture of the times of Charles I and Archbishop Laud, of the Puritans and the Royalists, it is a brilliant piece of composition. It was shortly followed by other essays in the same periodical on Machiavelli, Dryden, Hallam's *Constitutional History*, and on history in general. These all displayed his remarkable breadth of knowledge and his even more remarkable style. He became the most popular contributor to the *Review*, and attracted the attention of the leading politicians and literary men of England.

§ 13. His early political career

Macaulay's success as a writer, however, did not destroy his political aspirations. His great personal popularity — he was so gifted a conversationalist that even in the time when the art of conversation was deliberately cultivated he was courted and admired by some of the most distinguished personages in England — and his articles in the *Review* finally won for him his opportunity. Two articles on Mill and the Utilitarians so impressed Lord Landsdowne that in 1820 he offered the author the seat of Calne, a "pocket borough," with the express as-

surance that he had no wish to interfere with Macaulay's freedom of voting. By a strange coincidence, among the first speeches the young member made was an attack upon the very institution that made possible his own seat, the "pocket borough." The *First Reform Bill* was introduced on March 1, 1831, and the following night Macaulay made a speech which created a sensation. "Portions of it," Peel said, "were as beautiful as anything I have ever heard or read. It reminded one of the old times." The success of this speech determined Macaulay's active participation for the next three years in the affairs of the House. As a reward for his efforts in behalf of the Reform Bill, he was made one of the commissioners of the Board of Control, which regulated the affairs of India. Though he was now giving his evenings to the House of Commons and his days to India, he yet found time by rising at five in the morning for some literary composition. In his first two years as a member of the House he furnished the *Review* with eight important articles.

§ 14. Appointment to Supreme Council of India

While he was thus advancing his public fortunes by his administrative work, his able speaking, and his brilliant essays, the private fortunes of the Macaulay family were dwindling. His own income, derived from his office as a commissioner of the Board of Control of India and from his essays, was precarious. He could never tell when he should lose his office, and as to literature he said in 1833, "It has hitherto been my relaxation; I have never considered it as a means of support. . . . The thought of becoming a bookseller's hack, of spurring a jaded fancy to reluctant exertion, of filling sheets with trash merely that sheets may be filled, . . . is horrible to me." Thus, when he was offered a seat in the Supreme Council of India at a salary of £10,000 a year, he felt constrained to accept,

for he knew he could easily save £30,000 in his five years in office. His favorite sister, Hannah, made his acceptance easier by consenting to accompany him. So in February, 1834, the brother and sister set sail for Calcutta.

§ 15. His work in India

His career in India was notable for his efforts in establishing a system of national education and in drafting a penal code. The latter was an exceedingly fine piece of work. A successor in office said of it: "The 'India Penal Code' is to the English criminal law what a manufactured article is to the materials out of which it is made. It is to the French 'Code Pénal,' and, I may add, to the 'North German Code' of 1871, what a finished picture is to a sketch. It is far simpler, and much better expressed, than Livingston's 'Code for Louisiana,' and its practical success has been complete." It is only fair to say, however, that the code was too theoretically fine for practical use and was not enacted until nearly twenty-five years later, after it had been considerably revised. During his arduous official labors, however, Macaulay was not neglecting either his reading or his writing. In thirteen months he read through the Greek and Latin classics, some of them twice, and continued sending articles to the *Edinburgh Review*. The one on Bacon is perhaps the most striking of those written in India. Finally, in 1838, with enough saved to make him independent for the rest of his life, Macaulay set sail for England.

§ 16. Politics and literature: 1839–1847

The next eight years of his life were devoted both to politics and to literature. Shortly after his return, he visited Italy for the first time and was, as one would expect, enchanted. He took pleasure, however, not so much in natural scenery as in places memorable to him because of classical associations. While in Rome, he received an offer from Lord Melbourne of the office of Judge

Advocate, but he declined without hesitation. The salary, £2500, was now nothing to him, and the duties would interfere with his literary work. When he returned to England in 1839, he could not resist the pressure of his friends and re-entered Parliament as a member for Edinburgh. He was shortly given by Lord Melbourne a seat in the Whig Cabinet as War Secretary. During the next two years Macaulay devoted himself to his office and to the House of Commons. He nevertheless found time to write several articles for the *Review*, notably the one on Lord Clive. The Whigs went out of office in 1841 because of popular dissatisfaction with their handling of the Corn Law repeal. The Tories, under Sir Robert Peel, carried through the repeal of these Corn Laws, as the laws fixing a duty on the importation of grain were called, and continued in office for four years. Macaulay naturally went out with his party, not greatly to his regret, for he was anxious to resume his literary labors. He first wrote his essay on Warren Hastings, which with the one on Clive forms a wonderfully brilliant portrayal of British conquests in East India. He was exceedingly busy during the next three years ; he published one article after another in the *Review ;* in 1842, he published a volume of his poems, which was most enthusiastically received ; in 1843 he published, reluctantly and only because of pirated American editions, a collection of his essays. In the meantime the project for writing a history of England was growing upon him. In 1846, when the Whigs again came into power, he received in the cabinet the office of paymaster-general. His duties were very light, and his salary added £2000 a year to his income. He held this office for only a year, however, for he lost his popularity with his Edinburgh constituents and failed of re-election. He seemed indifferent to their affairs and had no sympathy with the radical

element among them. Moreover, he had lost much of his interest in politics, so absorbed was he in his history.

Macaulay retired to private life with little regret — with considerable relief, indeed, for the *History* was now his dominant thought. His method of composition was exceedingly slow. Though he worked twelve hours a day, he produced in that time an average of only two printed pages. His care concerning details was prodigious: he visited in person nearly all the localities where the events he narrated took place; he ransacked all the libraries, public and private, to which he could gain access. Thackeray said, "He reads twenty books to write a sentence; he travels one hundred miles to make a line of description." Moreover, he embodied in his volumes the knowledge gained from a lifetime of omnivorous reading, a knowledge that was almost incredible in its extent and exactness. The first two volumes finally appeared in 1848. The reception of them was most flattering, for they sold enormously not only in Great Britain but also in America and on the Continent. His fame was now secure. He could afford to live regardless of social and political demands. When in 1852 his party returned to office, he refused a seat in the cabinet. He could not resist, however, the compliment of an unsolicited election in Edinburgh, with which the city tried to make amends for its shabby treatment of him in 1847. But shortly afterwards, he received a warning that if his history was to be completed, he could not delay — a serious ailment in his heart action arose. Though he spoke twice in Parliament, he was aware that he could little afford the energy these speeches cost him. He henceforth rarely attended Parliament, he almost gave up letter writing, and he quite abandoned society. Finally, in November, 1855, volumes three and four of the *History* ap-

§ 17. The "History"; 1847–1855

peared. The reception of them was even warmer than it had been of the earlier ones, if that were possible. He received as royalties for one year's sale of these two volumes the sum of £20,000.

With this success, Macaulay turned to a life of quiet and leisure. He resigned his seat in Parliament to the "unfeigned sorrow" of the electors of Edinburgh. He bought the lease of Holly Lodge in Kensington. It was ideal for a bachelor of his tastes. Though the rooms were mostly small, the library was large and exceedingly pleasant, opening upon a beautiful lawn adorned with shrubs and flowers. Here he spent the remainder of his life, as happy as his illness would permit him to be. In 1857 he was raised to the peerage, with the title of Baron Macaulay of Rothley. He enjoyed his title, probably all the more because he must have felt it was gained neither by wealth nor by political or military service. He continued his simple life, working as best he could on the fifth volume of the *History*. He also succeeded in writing five articles for the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, that on Dr. Johnson being among them. In 1859, he managed to make a tour of the English lakes and the Highlands of Scotland. Everywhere his reception was most enthusiastic. In Edinburgh, in particular, the attentions paid him were almost embarrassing. In December he grew steadily worse. On Christmas day he said but little, and was constantly falling asleep. He died on the 28th of December, and was buried on the 9th of January, 1860, in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey, amid the tombs of Johnson and Garrick, Goldsmith and Addison.

§ 18. His last years: 1856–1859

MACAULAY THE MAN

What manner of man was this versatile genius? A great lady of England said to him in his thirty-first year, "Mr. Macaulay, you are so different to what I expected. I thought you were dark and thin, but you are fair, and, really, Mr. Macaulay, you are fat." Indeed he was never imposing in his personal appearance. His friend, Praed, the editor of Knight's *Quarterly Magazine*, described him as "a short manly figure, marvelously upright, with a bad neckcloth, and one hand in his waistcoat pocket. Of regular beauty he had little to boast." His nephew and biographer, Trevelyan, says of him further that he had "a massive head, and features of a powerful and rugged cast; but so constantly lighted up by every joyful and ennobling emotion that it mattered little if, when absolutely quiescent, his face was rather homely than handsome. . . . He at all times sat and stood straight, full, and square. . . . He dressed badly but not cheaply. His clothes, though ill put on, were good, and his wardrobe was always enormously overstocked. Later in life he indulged himself in an apparently inexhaustible succession of handsome embroidered waistcoats, which he used to regard with much complacency. . . . When in the open air, he wore perfectly new dark kid gloves, into the fingers of which he never succeeded in inserting his own more than half way."

§ 19. Personal appearance

The description of his figure suggests that he was not devoted to athletic pursuits, and truly he was utterly lacking in physical accomplishments. He could not swim, or row, or drive, or skate, or shoot. As for riding, he was informed when in attendance at Windsor as a cabinet minister that a horse was at his disposal. "If Her

§ 20. Habits and personality: (1) A great walker

Majesty wishes to see me ride," he is said to have remarked, "she must order out an elephant." His only exercise was walking. Until he was past fifty, he was always on his feet indoors and out, and thought nothing of a ten-mile walk. He had, too, the strange habit of reading as he walked, even on crowded streets.

As to his other pleasures, they were of a most simple kind. He was by nature most sociable, and always loved good companionship. As a young man, he took the keenest pleasure in the society and conversation of the famous men and women of the time. After his essay on Milton he was until his departure for India a social favorite. In particular he was a frequent guest at Holland House, where for nearly fifty years the greatest personages in England were gathered by the distinguished Lord Holland and his accomplished but eccentric wife. Upon his return from India, however, and especially after he lost his seat in 1847, he withdrew more and more from the society of the great, which was to him no longer a novelty. He still enjoyed the companionship of a dozen or so of the most eminent men in London, and he used constantly to gather a circle of them in his bachelor apartments in the Albany for a social breakfast.

§ 21. (2) His love of society

His books were an even dearer form of recreation throughout his life. The amount and character of his reading during approximately the first year of his stay in India is almost unbelievable. "During the last thirteen months I have read Aeschylus twice; Sophocles twice; Euripides once," and more than twenty-five other Greek and Latin authors, some once, some twice. Nor was his reading limited to the Greek and Latin classics. He read French, German, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, and Portuguese, most of which he taught himself by using

§ 22. (3) His love of reading

the Bible as a text-book. In English he read everything, not even excluding the most sentimental and trashy novel. He wrote to his sister Margaret from India, "Books are becoming everything to me. If I had at this moment my choice of life, I would bury myself in one of those immense libraries that we saw together at the Universities, and never pass a waking hour without a book before me."

§ 23. (4) His affection for his sisters

But the sweetest pleasure of all in Macaulay's life was the companionship of his sisters, Hannah and Margaret, who were respectively ten and twelve years younger than he, and in his later years, of his young nephews and nieces. He was himself never married, and as far as we know, never wished to marry, for Trevelyan mentions no trace of a romance in his life. When Margaret married, he was nearly broken-hearted: he had concentrated his feelings more intensively and more exclusively upon her and Hannah than was good for himself. He writes: "I have still one more stake to lose. There remains one event [the event of Hannah's marrying] for which, when it arrives, I shall, I hope, be prepared. From that moment, with a heart formed, if ever any man's heart was formed, for domestic happiness, I shall have nothing left in this world but ambition." Hannah's marriage, however, did not deprive him of her companionship. She accompanied him to India, and when she shortly after met and married a promising young Englishman, Charles Trevelyan — the father of the biographer — she and her husband made their home with Macaulay while he remained in India. For his own father, Macaulay always had a great respect and affection, but there was too much rigidity in the older man's make-up to permit of his being the subject of such love as the sisters received.

Macaulay's beautiful feeling for his sisters is quite in keeping with his character as a whole : he was generous to a fault, most strictly honorable, and above reproach in his personal life. His gifts after he became rich were often rashly generous. In his journal under the date September 14th, 1859, appears this interesting passage : " A Dr. —— called, and introduced himself as a needy man of letters. I was going to give him a sovereign, and send him away, when I discovered that he was the philologist, whom I should never have expected to see in such a plight. I felt for him, and gave him a hundred pounds." Macaulay's absolute integrity is best illustrated by his action in Parliament when he refused to acquiesce in a measure of the ministry of which he was a member. His father and sisters were largely dependent upon him at the time, and he could ill afford to lose his office. Nevertheless he placed his resignation in the hands of Lord Althorp, the prime minister, and spoke against the bill. Fortunately, the ministry came round to his view. He was therefore able to write his father : " Lord Althorp told me yesterday night that the cabinet had determined not to accept my resignation. I have therefore the singular good luck of having saved both my honor and my place, and of having given no just ground of offense either to the Abolitionists or to my party friends."

§ 24. His character : (1) Virtues, generosity and integrity

Macaulay would not have been human, however, if he had not had his faults. The outstanding one was his self-assurance. He was always perfectly sure that he was right, and never recognized the fact that there might be two sides to a question. Nor did he hesitate in any company to express his opinions vehemently. His father, having been told of this tendency, wrote to him in college, quoting from Cowper's *Conversation :*

§ 25. (2) Faults : (a) Self-confidence

"Ye powers who rule the tongue, if such there are,
And make colloquial happiness your care,
Preserve me from the thing I dread and hate,
A duel in the form of a debate.
Vociferated logic kills me quite.
A noisy man is always in the right."

He then went on to remonstrate at length with his son : "You know how much such a quotation as this would fall in with my notions — averse as I am to loud and noisy tones, and self-confident, overwhelming, and yet perhaps very unsound arguments. And you will remember how anxiously I dwelt upon this point while you were at home. . . . I do long and pray most earnestly that the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit may be substituted for vehemence and self-confidence, and that you may be as much distinguished for the former as ever you have been in the latter. It is a school in which I am not ambitious that any child of mine should take a high degree." Lord Melbourne summed up admirably Macaulay's crowning weakness : "I wish I were as cocksure of any one thing as Macaulay is of everything."

Hardly less striking than Macaulay's self-confidence was the influence of his prejudices upon his judgment. He seems to have found it difficult to be fair toward women. His essay on Madame D'Arblay (Frances Burney, the author of *Evelina*) is condescending in tone throughout ; he frequently damns with faint praise. In his *Life of Johnson*, Macaulay is grossly unfair both to Mrs. Johnson and to Mrs. Thrale. He speaks, with little justification, of the former as a "tawdry painted grandmother" and of the latter as having a "base, degrading passion" for an Italian fiddler. In the light of his adoration for his sisters, it is hard to understand

§ 26. (b) Judgment influenced by prejudices : (i) Women

how he could have been so harsh in his treatment of women, unless the explanation be that his own sisters were so beyond reproach that all other women seemed unworthy by comparison.

§ 27. (ii) America

Macaulay seemingly let his prejudices influence his judgment also in the case of democratic institutions, particularly those of America. Though he was liberal in his political beliefs and a firm believer in the progress of civilization, he saw in America, where the greatest progress had taken place, only melancholy signs of anarchy and decay — signs portending the collapse of liberty and the triumph of ignorance and crime. He wrote to an American in 1857 his belief that when the great mass of the population should actually know want, the whole fabric of the government would be rent. The demagogue would be elected in preference to the statesman. "There will be, I fear, spoliation. The spoliation will increase the distress; the distress will produce fresh spoliation. There is nothing to stop you; your Constitution is all sail and no anchor. . . . Either civilization or liberty will perish. Either some Caesar or Napoleon will seize the reins of government with a strong hand, or your republic will be as fearfully plundered and laid waste by barbarians in the twentieth century as the Roman Empire was in the fifth." What could have led him to such a gloomy view is unimaginable, except possibly his anger at the unauthorized editions of his work by "enterprising Yankee publishers"; or perhaps it was his irritation at the insistence of American tourists — "Yankees" was the term he always used — in invading his privacy. "I went the day before yesterday," he wrote to Mr. Ellis, "to Grosmere Churchyard, and saw Wordsworth's tomb. I thought of announcing my intention of going, and issuing guinea tickets to people who wished to see me there; for a

Yankee who was here a few days ago, and heard that I was expected, said that he would give the world to see that most sublime of all spectacles, Macaulay standing by the grave of Wordsworth." Or, more seriously, perhaps his feelings concerning democratic institutions were his natural reaction to the excesses of the French Revolution.

§ 28. (iii) Whigs and Tories

But the most striking case of the influence of Macaulay's prejudices is to be found in his treatment of the Whigs and the Tories. These were the names given to the two great parties in English politics from the end of the seventeenth century down to comparatively recent times. After the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603, the Stuart line came to the English throne, James VI of Scotland becoming James I of England. The character of these rulers was such that they made staunch friends, but very bitter enemies. At first the friends of the king were called Cavaliers ; his enemies were called Roundheads, because, being chiefly Puritans, they wore their hair cropped close. Later, toward the end of Charles II's reign, the adherents of the king and of his opponents began to be called respectively Tories and Whigs. It is a curious circumstance, as Macaulay points out in his *History*, that one of the nicknames is of Irish and the other of Scottish origin. The word *tory* meant originally a *highwayman ;* it was applied to those Catholic outlaws who took refuge in the bogs of Ireland. *Whig*, on the other hand, is of Scotch origin ; it was first used in connection with the Presbyterian zealots of Scotland who from their excesses in the opposite direction had fled to the western Lowlands. The Tory party included a very large majority of the nobles and of the wealthy gentry in the country ; also the Established-Church clergy, the Universities, and all laymen who were attached to the Anglican ritual.

With the upper classes and the churchmen were joined two other groups : there was first a large number who made pleasure their business — artists, actors, painters, poets - -, who knew that they " might thrive under a superb and luxurious despotism, but must starve under the rigid rule of the precisians " ; secondly, there were the Catholics, who to a man threw in their lot with the king's party, both because the queen, the sister of Louis XIII of France, was a Catholic and would use her no inconsiderable influence in their favor and because they knew they could expect nothing but the harshest treatment from the non-conformists. The Whig party got its main strength among the small freeholders of the country and among the merchants and shopkeepers of the towns. With these were joined a formidable minority of the nobility — all the more formidable in that they acted upon principle and not interest. There was also included the whole body of Protestant non-conformists, together with those members of the Established Church who adhered to Calvinism, a doctrine popular about forty years before, the chief tenet of which was that a man's soul is predestined by God to salvation or destruction. In the House of Commons the Whig element generally had a majority, but the House of Lords was overwhelmingly Tory.

§ 20. Macaulay the Whig

Macaulay's judgment could not escape considerable influence from the nature of his Whiggism. He was converted from Toryism while he was in college, and he remained a Whig until his death. " I entered public life a Whig," he said in 1849, " and a Whig I am determined to remain." His weakness lies not so much in the fact that he was a Whig throughout his life, but rather in that he was so dogmatic and opinionated in his Whiggism. As Trevelyan puts it, " He left college a staunch and vehement Whig, eager to maintain against all

comers and at any moment that none but Whig opinions had a leg to stand upon." Such dogmatism is almost wholly irrational. It tends to question-begging, to reaching a decision upon prejudice rather than upon a judicial weighing of the facts. Is it any wonder, then, that Macaulay is so savage in his treatment of John Wilson Croker, especially as concerns the latter's *magnum opus*, his edition of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*? With all its defects the work had merits which Macaulay did not, or would not, see; the results of Croker's researches have been of inestimable value to later editors. Nor was Macaulay in his *Life of Johnson* less unfair to anything or anybody else Tory. If Johnson took care that the Whig dogs did not get the better of it, Macaulay certainly took care that the Tory ones did not either.

MACAULAY'S POSITION IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

This opinionated Whig, this cocksure critic of things in general, of democracy and women in particular, nevertheless has no insignificant position as a writer of four different forms of English literature. First as a poet he has always been immensely popular. True, he published only one small volume, his *Lays of Ancient Rome*, and wrote only a small number of additional poems. Yet to-day any schoolboy can quote from *Horatius*. This popularity is to be accounted for not by the poetic genius of the writer, but rather by the stirring action of the ballads. They are stories in rimed verse not unlike the poetry of Sir Walter Scott, and they rank with Scott's as poetry. Each story is told in perfectly clear language, with such vigor and enthusiasm, with so much martial spirit and patriotic fervor that they could not but be

§ 30. As a poet

popular. Yet Macaulay was not a true poet. His poems are not the irrepressible outbursts of enraptured genius ; they are rather the polished handiwork of a skilled mechanic. They are rhetoric, not inspiration.

§ 31. As an orator

Macaulay was greater as orator than as poet. Though in his own day he was often called "the Burke of the age," he was far less great than his illustrious predecessor. Yet he was in a way more effective ; for if a speech by Burke was a dinner bell, a signal to clear the benches, one by Macaulay, as Gladstone says, was a clarion call to fill them. A political opponent describes picturesquely his effectiveness : "He is an ugly, . . . shapeless little dumpling of a fellow, with a featureless face, too — except indeed a good expansive forehead — sleek, puritanical, sandy hair, large glimmering eyes, and a mouth from ear to ear. He has a lisp and a burr, moreover, and speaks thickly and huskily for several minutes before he gets into the swing of his discourse ; but after that nothing can be more dazzling than his whole execution. What he says is . . . so well-worded, and so volubly and forcibly delivered — there is such an endless string of epigram and antithesis — such a flashing of epithets — such an accumulation of images — and the voice is so trumpet-like, and the action so grotesquely emphatic that you might hear a pin drop in the House." The wealth of illustrative material, of statistics, of quotations, of anecdotes, was responsible for his effectiveness ; yet it is interesting to note that he never used notes in speaking, nor did he, as has sometimes been said, carefully write his speeches out beforehand and memorize them. But they were neither impromptu nor extemporaneous, as we use the words to-day. Macaulay had the unique practice of thinking his speeches out beforehand, and then of delivering them exactly as he had thought them out. It is true

only in this sense that " his speeches were most carefully prepared, and were repeated without the loss or omission of a single word."

§ 32. As historian

Macaulay would have rested his fame no more on his oratory than on his poetry ; his *History* he considered his *magnum opus*, and to the composition of it he devoted the later years of his life. What *Paradise Lost* was to Milton, the *History* was to Macaulay in his own mind. Enough has been said about the composition of it ; there remains the problem of estimating the author's accomplishment as a historian. Perhaps the shortest solution is to say that Macaulay did exactly what he set out to do : " I shall not be satisfied unless I produce something which shall for a few days supersede the last fashionable novel on the table of young ladies." As he believed history should be made, he made it : " It should invest with the reality of human flesh and blood beings whom we are too much inclined to consider as personified qualities in an allegory ; call up our ancestors before us with all their peculiarities of language, manners, and garb ; show us over their houses, seat us at their tables, rummage their old-fashioned wardrobes, explain the uses of their ponderous furniture." He may have allowed his prejudices to influence his judgment ; he may have painted his pictures too much in black and white ; he may have sacrificed general effect to vivid particulars ; he may have thought of the end of history as being interest first and accuracy second ; yet in his own field he stands supreme — the " Titian of word painting." A great historical painter of the realistic school, his pictures have never been surpassed for vividness. The famous chapter describing England in the second half of the seventeenth century, the brilliant thirty pages (over which he spent three weeks) narrating the massacre of Glencoe are without parallel

in English literature. As a painter who made his figures stand out on the historical canvas with unique vividness, Macaulay cannot fail to be ranked a true master of historical composition.

§ 33. As essayist

To mention Macaulay's essays after such a series of superlatives concerning his history may seem in the nature of an anticlimax. Yet his essays, and one of them in particular, are, it is needless to say, our chief concern in this little book. Nor, indeed, was Macaulay less great as essayist than as historian in so far as essay writing includes the delineation of character and the narration of events ; in fairness of criticism, however, and in accuracy of judgment he is lacking.

§ 34. (1) Lack of critical ability

He recognized his own limitations as a critic ; for in a letter to Napier, editor of the *Edinburgh Review* after Jeffrey, he said : " I am not successful in analyzing the effect of works of genius. I have written several things on historical, political, and moral questions, of which, on the fullest consideration, I am not ashamed, and by which I should be willing to be estimated ; but I have never written a page of criticism on poetry, or the fine arts, which I would not burn if I had the power. Hazlitt used to say of himself, ' I am nothing if not critical.' The case with me is directly the reverse. I have a strong and acute enjoyment of works of the imagination, but I have never habituated myself to dissect them. Perhaps I enjoy them the more keenly for that very reason. Such books as Lessing's *Laocoön*,[1] such passages as the criticism on Hamlet in *Wilhelm*

[1] Lessing was a German critic and dramatist of the eighteenth century. His *Laocoön* is a classic, not only in *German* but in European literature ; in it he defined by analysis the limitations of poetry, sculpture and painting

Meister,[1] fill me with wonder and despair." But Macaulay was not quite right as to the cause of this defect in critical and analytical power. His memory and his omnivorous reading were the two elements unfavorable to the development of the reasoning faculty. His memory enabled him to save himself the trouble of reasoning. He says the evident thing and emphasizes his truism by a mass of illustrations. He observes that Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegory as vivid as a concrete history — not an obscure or unrecognized fact. He then illustrates by pointing out that the trial of Christian and Faithful is meant merely as a satire upon the judges in Charles II's time. Surely that is not criticism of the highest order.

§ 35. (2) Tendency to exaggerate

A second weakness in Macaulay's power as an essayist is to be found in his tendency to exaggerate. Though it is hardly fair to say that he would rather make an impression than tell the truth — for his assured integrity raises him above any such suspicion —, nevertheless he so had the habit of picturing things vividly that he believed his impression to be the right one. What he subconsciously desired to be true, instantaneously became true in his own mind. Once more, he can most effectively be made his own critic — this time unconsciously, for the words he used were in a letter to Napier in criticism of Lord Brougham, his chief rival as contributor to the *Edinburgh Review ;* they are exactly applicable to Macaulay himself except for a few exaggerated details : " His [Brougham's] late articles, particularly the long one in the April number, have very

[1] Goethe (1749–1832) was the Shakespeare of Germany ; his *Wilhelm Meister* was a novel which like Hugo's *Les Miserables* is even greater for its digressions, such as its flashes of intuitive criticism, than for its story.

high merit. They are, indeed, models of magazine writing, as distinguished from other sorts of writing. They are not, I think, made for duration. Every thing about them is exaggerated, incorrect, sketchy. All the characters are either too black or too fair. The passions of the writer do not suffer him even to maintain the decent appearance of impartiality and the style, though striking and animated, will not bear examination through a single paragraph. But the effect of the first perusal is great; and few people read an article in a review twice. A bold, dashing, scene-painting manner is that which always succeeds best in periodical writing; and I have no doubt that these lively and vigorous papers of Lord Brougham will be of more use to you than more highly finished compositions." There is evidence, furthermore, that Macaulay suspected his own periodical writing of having these very faults. In another letter to Napier, he says: "The public judges, and ought to judge, indulgently of periodical works. They are not expected to be highly finished. Their natural life is only six weeks. Sometimes their writer is at a distance from the books to which he wants to refer. Sometimes he is forced to hurry through his task in order to catch the post. He may blunder; he may contradict himself; he may break off in the middle of a story; he may give an immoderate extension to one part of his subject, and dismiss an equally important part in a few words. All this is readily forgiven if there be a certain spirit and vivacity in his style." Upon analysis, however, this explanation will be found to be merely an admission of a fault and an apology for it rather than a justification of it. And what is to be said concerning the *Life of Johnson* and the four other essays which appeared in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*? They may not be so full of superlatives and prejudice as were

his early essays, but they are certainly not free from these fault.

With their defects of substance, why are the essays so popular? The explanation is not far to seek; it lies in Macaulay's inimitable style — a style so distinctive that the adjective *Macaulayan* has just as definite a meaning to the educated person as have *Addisonian*, *Johnsonian*, and *Miltonic*; a style so striking that the early editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, Jeffrey, could write to him, "The more I think, the less I can conceive where you picked up that style."

§ 30. Merit of essays in style

MACAULAY'S STYLE

Of course this striking style was not peculiar to the essays: it is markedly noticeable in the *History*; it is the secret of his effectiveness as an orator; it is even the distinguishing quality of his poetry. And what are the elements that make this marvelous style so famous? They are just two: a clearness, a lucidity, that makes it possible for him that runs to read; a forcibleness, an effectiveness, that made the *Edinburgh Review* sell or fail to sell according to whether there was or was not an article in it by Macaulay. The clearness of Macaulay's style was due to the excessive care he took in composition and revision. In spite of his protestations that his periodical essays were not highly finished, he had certain standards that he could not bring himself to neglect. The clearness of his style is to be seen first in the structure of his essays. He had developed to a high degree the faculty of organizing his materials. He was able to see things in the right proportions, and to show them in their right relationship. His mind was orderly, and the production of it was orderly. His essays have been compared to watches,

§ 37. Clearness

for they may be taken apart and put together, so carefully are they constructed. Any schoolboy will admit the orderly structure of the *Life of Johnson*.

His paragraphs, for instance, were models of unity and coherence. He had the knack of using what are technically called *transitional topic sentences*. For instance, there is the paragraph beginning, "While leading this miserable and vagrant life, Johnson fell in love." The paragraph tells of his love for Mrs. Elizabeth Porter; the preceding one, of course, tells of his early struggles. By beginning his paragraphs with a sentence expressing the topic of the whole paragraph and by having every other sentence develop this topic, he was able to make of each paragraph a perfect unit.

His sentences, too, are almost monotonously and mechanically perfect. He seems to have had an aversion for pronouns; fearing that the reference of the *hims*, *hers*, and *its* might be ambiguous, he did not hesitate to repeat a whole group of substantives. Again he would repeat a whole statement, merely to be sure that the sense was unmistakable. He avoided sentences the least bit involved in structure. He hated parentheses and qualifications, and preferred to express a subsidiary statement as a simple proposition, rather than to attach it as a subordinate clause to a main statement. His system was so effective that a reader at the publishing house printing his *History* could say there was in a whole volume only one sentence the meaning of which was not obvious at first sight.

The force of Macaulay's style was responsible even more than its clearness for the popularity of his works, the word *force* being used in its technical sense to mean *interest*, *effectiveness*, "the distinguishing quality of a style that holds the attention." The secret of his force lay in the use of concrete details and in the mastery of several

§ 38. Force: (1) By concreteness

rhetorical devices. The classic illustration of the power of the concrete to hold the attention is the definition of a philosopher : put abstractly, the philosopher is one who deals with the abstract ; put concretely, the philosopher may be defined as a blind man in a dark cellar looking for a black cat that is not there. Two sentences from the paragraph concerning his love for Mrs. Porter will illustrate his use of concrete details : " To ordinary spectators, the lady appeared to be a short, fat, coarse woman, painted half an inch thick, dressed in gaudy colors, and fond of exhibiting provincial airs and graces which were not exactly those of the Queensberrys and Lepels. To Johnson, however, whose passions were strong, whose eye-sight was too weak to distinguish ceruse from natural bloom, and who had seldom or never been in the same room with a woman of real fashion, his Titty, as he called her, was the most beautiful, graceful, and accomplished of her sex."

§ 39. (2) By rhetorical devices : (a) The periodic sentence

The other source of Macaulay's effectiveness of style lay in his mastery of several rhetorical devices, notably the periodic sentence and the principle of balance. The periodic sentence, as distinguished from the loose sentence, is one in which the sense is suspended until the end. Barrett Wendell sums up (from Herbert Spencer's *Philosophy of Style*) the greater effectiveness of the periodic sentence : " In a loose style, the mind of the reader tends constantly to pause, to grasp the complete idea, at each point where the sense is grammatically complete ; and each added clause involves not only the addition of some new features to an idea that one is tempted to consider complete without them, but often also the unmaking of an idea into which the logically incomplete if grammatically complete statements of the earlier portions

of the sentence have led us." Is not this explanation a perfect example of the very weakness of the loose sentence? There are at least four possible stopping places; each time that we are forced to go on, the thought becomes a little less distinct in our minds. The periodic sentence on the contrary, by holding our attention in suspense, gives up, when at the end the sense is complete, a most distinct, a much more forcible, impression. Barrett Wendell illustrates Macaulay's periodicity by a few sentences from the essay on Warren Hastings:

"With all his faults — and they were neither few nor small — only one cemetery was worthy to contain his remains. In that temple of silence and reconciliation where the enmities of twenty generations lie buried, in the great abbey which has during many ages afforded a quiet resting place to those whose minds and bodies have been shattered by the contentions of the Great Hall, the dust of the illustrious accused should have mingled with the dust of the illustrious accusers. This was not to be. Yet the place of interment was not ill chosen. Behind the chancel of the parish church of Daylesford, in earth which already held the bones of many chiefs of the house of Hastings, was laid the coffin of the greatest man who has ever borne that ancient and widely extended name."

The above passage is given at length because it illustrates besides Macaulay's periodicity his use of balance in thought and in expression. He was never satisfied with one word, phrase, clause, or sentence if he could think of a fitting companion for it. In his article on the *Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay*, he says: "Take a single example, Shylock. Is he so eager for money as to be indifferent to revenge? Or so eager for revenge as to be indifferent to money? Or so bent on both

§ 40. (b) The principle of balance

together as to be indifferent to the honor of the nation and the law of Moses? . . . A superficial critic might say that hatred is Shylock's ruling passion. But how many passions have amalgamated to form that hatred? It is partly the result of wounded pride: Antonio has called him dog. It is partly the result of covetousness: Antonio has hindered him of half a million. . . . It is partly the result of national and religious feeling: Antonio has spit on the Jewish gaberdine." But Macaulay's most famous use of balance is in his early exposition of Boswell as biographer: "But these men attained literary eminence in spite of their weaknesses. Boswell attained it by reason of his weaknesses," and so on.[1] Artificial this excessive use of balance is without a doubt; but the Victorians were nothing if not self-conscious.

§ 41. Macaulay and Johnson compared

By Macaulay's favorite principle of balance, by a comparison of him with Johnson, an effective summary of his life and work may be made. The "eminent subject" of the model essay and the writer of that essay are markedly alike in many respects. Both were extremely precocious; both were omnivorous readers; both had remarkable memories; both were distinguished for their conversational powers; both delighted in good companionship; both were strong partisans, though the one was an ardent Tory and the other as strong a Whig; both were of irreproachable moral character. But in one material respect the two men were unlike: Macaulay was as much favored by fortune as Johnson was buffeted by it. Johnson had to face nearly all the obstacles nature and chance could offer — a chronic disease, an ungainly body, great privations, and few opportunities for the display of his ability. Macaulay

[1] See § 50 below.

was in truth a " favorite of the gods " — with splendid health, judicious parents, instantaneous success in all that he undertook, and limitless opportunities for the exercise of his powers.

MACAULAY ON JOHNSON

Macaulay wrote two essays on Johnson, a review of Croker's edition of Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*, and twenty-five years later a biography of Johnson for the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. The early essay, published in 1831 in the *Edinburgh Review*, shows Macaulay's artificiality of style at its worst. He admittedly was influenced by his feelings for Croker, a bitter political enemy. " See whether I do not dust that varlet's jacket for him in the next number of the ' Blue and Yellow.' I detest him more than cold boiled veal," he wrote his sister. Moreover, the subject itself, Boswell and Johnson, was a tempting one for flashy treatment. Finally, the author's style was at the very peak of its youthful exuberance. This exuberance he tried to justify in a most remarkable letter to the editor of the *Edinburgh Review* objecting to the omission of certain passages in one of his articles : " The passages omitted were the most pointed and ornamented in the whole review. Now, for high and grave works, a history for example, or a system of political or moral philosophy, Dr. Johnson's rule — that every sentence which the writer thinks fine ought to be cut out — is excellent. But periodical works like ours, which, unless they strike at the first reading, are not likely to strike at all, whose whole life is a month or two, may I think be allowed to be sometimes even viciously florid. Probably in estimating the real value of any tinsel which I may put upon my articles, you and I should

§ 42. Macaulay's earlier essay on Johnson

not materially differ. But it is not by his own taste, but by the taste of the fish, that the angler is determined in his choice of bait." In his review of Croker's book, Macaulay practised to the utmost the theory he preached so frankly to his editor.

§ 43. The "Life of Johnson" compared with the "Review of Croker's Boswell"

The *Life of Johnson* is very much better in subject matter and in style than the earlier essay. In the twenty-five years that had passed since 1831, Macaulay's style had lost some of its exuberance, and his judgment had become a little less clouded by prejudice. When he first published his essays in collected form (1843), he had to admit that he read few of them with satisfaction. He was right in thinking, however, that the best were the latest: "The most hostile critic must admit, I think, that I have improved greatly as a writer. The third volume seems to me worth two of the second, and the second worth ten of the first." Moreover, this later essay on Johnson was not written for a periodical but for a reference work, the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. The author was therefore not so strongly under the necessity of writing in a "catchy style." He took infinite pains with all the biographies he wrote for the *Britannica*, the one on Pitt being in preparation for nine months. Trevelyan calls the *Life of Johnson* "a model of that which its eminent subject pronounced to be the essential qualification of a biographer — the art of writing trifles with dignity."

§ 44. Theme of "Life of Johnson"

Macaulay's primary purpose in this model essay is to give us information concerning Johnson's life and works, but underlying this purpose there is a secondary motive, the presentation of a theme, a unifying thread running through the whole essay. Most formal essays have as an incidental or hidden purpose some central truth.

In the *Life of Johnson* this theme is stated in the very first paragraph : " But the force of his mind overcame every impediment." Throughout the essay we find impediments multiplied, exaggerated, but we always find Johnson overcoming these impediments, be they indolence, procrastination, disease, eccentricities, or the state of letters in London at the time. Sometimes, indeed, Macaulay states or implies that Johnson wielded the influence he had, because of and not in spite of his eccentricities. In paragraph 40 he says, " Even the peculiarities which seemed to unfit him for civilized society . . . increased the interest which his new associates, the Thrales, took in him." But this exception was more apparent than real, for it is stated that in any one but a man of genius, " such oddities would have excited only disgust." In other words the Thrales were all the more interested because these eccentricities showed what obstacles Johnson had been obliged to surmount. Besides the obstacles inherent in Johnson, Macaulay paints most vividly that obstacle encountered in the low state of letters in London at the time. It is typical of Macaulay, however, to neglect the deeper matters, the causes, for instance, of this low state of letters. It is impossible to understand Johnson's difficulties or his life in London unless one knows what life in general in London was like in his day.

JOHNSON'S LONDON AND ITS INFLUENCE UPON HIM

About the best thing that can be said of life in London in Johnson's time is that it had improved considerably since the generation of Addison and Steele. When Johnson reached London in 1737, Queen Anne had been dead twenty-three years, and the last *Spectator* had

been printed an equal number of years. Though the essential characteristics of the period to which the name of the "stupid and meek" Queen is given remained, the efforts of Addison and Steele "to expose the fake arts of life, to pull off the disguises of cunning, vanity, and affectation, and to recommend a general simplicity in our dress, our discourse, and our behavior" had not been altogether in vain. Many of the worst barbarisms of the preceding generation seem to have disappeared. We hear nothing now of the Mohocks (Mohawks), roving bands of rowdies — often young men of wealth and supposedly good breeding — who made life in London at night unsafe with their pranks. Johnson himself is witness to some improvement: "In the last age, when my mother lived in London, there were two sets of people, those who gave the wall, and those who took it: the peaceable and the quarrelsome. When I returned to Lichfield, after having been in London, my mother asked me whether I was one of those who gave the wall, or those that took it. *Now* it is fixed that every man keeps to the right; or if one is taking the wall, another yields it; and it is never a dispute." But the social life does not seem to have changed considerably. The two thousand odd public coffee-houses were, it is true, waning in popularity; the inns and taverns were beginning to take their place. Johnson's favorite resort was the Mitre Tavern, and he once remarked "there is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn." But in spite of the tendency of the tavern to substitute tippling for talking, conversation was still truly an art. Perhaps, indeed, it reached its very climax in Johnson himself. It is not an implausible guess that the very reason for the low state of letters — for literature's

§ 45. Life in London in Johnson's time

not having "begun to flourish under the patronage of the public" — was that the gentlemen of the time preferred to talk about books than to buy and read them.

§ 46. Political conditions

An explanation of the fact that "literature had ceased to flourish under the patronage of the great" is to be found in the changed political conditions. The earlier generation of politicians had found the support of able writers necessary to their success. The strife between Whigs and Tories was intense, and each party found it expedient to use the great writers to advance its own interests and to satirize its enemies. Addison's rapid rise was due to the ability with which he supported the Whig cause, and in particular to his poem, *The Campaign*, written to order to commemorate the victory of the great Whig General, Marlborough, at Blenheim. When Johnson went to London in 1737, Robert Walpole was in the midst of his long domination of English politics. Walpole was not dependent upon literary men or pamphleteers. He used other means to get and hold his power. Parliamentary support could be bought by places and pensions, and even by hard cash. As for the support of the country at large, he had nothing to worry about so long as the country maintained its prosperity, for the Tories were hopelessly divided over the Jacobitic designs of one faction. Moreover, Walpole "was ignorant of books and loved neither writing nor reading, and if he had a taste for art his real love was for the table, the bottle and the chase." Is it any wonder, then, that between the public's preference for talking over reading, and the failure of the great to need or desire the support of writers, the position of a man of letters in Johnson's time was difficult?

To certain peculiarities of taste in this age are to be

imputed most of Johnson's defects as a critic. The influence of Addison and Steele, and the multiplication of clubs and coffee-houses, with the development of tolerance and better manners in social life, resulted in a kind of superficial elegance showing itself in both prose and poetry. The age extended from the English Revolution in 1688 to the beginning of the French Revolution in 1789 ; it came to be called by the writers themselves the Augustan Age, because they thought it to be distinguished by the refinement of taste characterizing the reign of Emperor Augustus. They believed Pope, Addison, Swift, and Johnson to be the modern parallels of Horace, Cicero, Ovid, and Vergil. The term *classic*, however, is more commonly used, for its modern connotation is more accurately applicable. It suggests rigid adherence to classical rules, and emphasis upon form, sometimes at the expense of content. It is to be contrasted with *romantic*, which suggests an ignoring of rules and conventions, and emphasis upon spontaneity and individuality. The Classic Age was an age of revolt against the fantastic style of the writers of the Restoration. The critics of the Classic Age demanded that poetry should follow exact rules, especially such rules as they professed to find in writers like Aristotle and Horace. Dryden established the heroic couplet, and it became the standard poetic form under Pope's perfecting hand. Johnson, who followed these two as the third literary dictator of Classicism, was compelled to defend Classicism in general and the heroic couplet in particular. The true Classicism tended to become a kind of pseudoclassicism, the writers of which strove to repress all natural feelings and enthusiasm, and to develop a kind of elegant formalism.

§ 47. Literary tastes

Johnson could not see this evil tendency ; he could see and appreciate only the classical tastes of the past

He was, for instance, unable to appreciate original works of imagination : he abhorred Milton's Puritanism and stoutly maintained the superiority of rime over blank verse ; he preferred the sentimental grandiloquence and conventional moralizing of Richardson's *Pamela* to the vigorous realism of Fielding's *Tom Jones* ; he thought Gray, one of the first of the new Romantic school, an inferior poet, and said of his odes, " They are forced plants, raised in a hotbed ; and they are but poor plants ; they are but cucumbers after all." The truth is that Johnson was no judge of composition not fashioned according to the principles of the classic school. Fortunately for him, his fame does not rest upon his critical ability.

§ 48. Johnson's defects as a critic

BOSWELL AS BIOGRAPHER

Macaulay would have us believe that Johnson's fame rests not upon what Johnson himself wrote but upon what Boswell wrote about him. " Boswell's book has done for him more than the best of his own books could do ; " yet to-day few read even Boswell, and all know Johnson. The memorable life, " the greatest biography ever written," " the best book in the world," is read by surprisingly few. It seems to be joining Milton's *Paradise Lost* as a good book to know something about and to pass by unread. The truth is that for one reader of Boswell's book there are one hundred readers of Macaulay's essay. It is therefore not far wrong to say that if in Macaulay's time Johnson's fame rested not on what he himself wrote but on what Boswell wrote about him, now in our time Johnson's fame rests neither on what he himself wrote nor on what Boswell wrote about him, but on what Macaulay wrote about

§ 49. Johnson's fame to-day

what Boswell wrote about him — a third-hand fame, no less.

What kind of a man was this Boswell, who had the honor of passing on to Macaulay the keeping alive of the most vivid personality in English literature? Macaulay describes the little Scotchman in no flattering terms in the *Review of Croker's Edition* — and at the same time admits his pre-eminence as a biographer. "Homer is not more decidedly the first of heroic poets, Shakespeare is not more decidedly the first of dramatists, Demosthenes is not more decidedly the first of orators, than Boswell is the first of biographers. He has no second. . . . Many of the greatest men that ever lived have written biography. Boswell was one of the smallest men that ever lived, and he has beaten them all. He was . . . a man of the meanest and feeblest intellect. . . . He was the laughing stock of the whole of that brilliant society which has owed to him the greater part of its fame. He was always laying himself at the feet of some eminent man, and begging to be spit upon and trampled upon. . . . Servile and impertinent, shallow and pedantic, a bigot and sot, bloated with family pride, and eternally blustering about the dignity of a born gentleman, yet stooping to be a talebearer, an eavesdropper, a common butt in the taverns of London — such was this man, and such he was content and proud to be." "[Most men] attained literary eminence in spite of their weaknesses. Boswell attained it by reason of his weaknesses. If he had not been a great fool, he would never have been a great writer. Without all the qualities which made him the jest and the torment of those among whom he lived, without the officiousness, the inquisitiveness, the effrontery, toad-eating, the insensibility to all reproof, he never could have produced so excellent a book."

§ 50. Boswell as biographer: according to Macaulay

As with all of Macaulay's exaggerations, there was yet a germ of truth beneath all the epithets. This

§ 51. The true Boswell

James Boswell was an extraordinary figure — "a shallow little Scotch barrister" whose whole ambition was to shine in the reflected glory of great men. He was of good family, his father being elevated to the supreme court of Scotland with the title of Lord Auchincleck. Boswell himself was trained for the law, but early recognized his true vocation. By the time he reached his majority, he had begun to Boswellize, to attach himself to every celebrity that came within his ken. Finally, in 1763, he met for the first time (in the back shop of Tom Davie's, a bookseller of Covent Garden) the great man of his dreams, Dictionary Johnson, and was severely snubbed by him — except that Boswell could not be snubbed. Boswell was at the time twenty-three, while Johnson was fifty-four. For the remainder of his life, Boswell's excuse for existence was to draw forth, record, and interpret the dicta of his idol. He survived Johnson only eleven years, and those years he devoted to his great work, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*. Macaulay was not the first to offer the theory that Boswell wrote a great book because he was a great fool and not in spite of it. The poet Gray had in Boswell's own lifetime said, "Any fool may write a valuable book by chance." The truth is, however, that Boswell was a biographical genius. He was able to give an extraordinary lifelikeness to his pictures; his retentiveness and accuracy, especially in reporting conversations, is remarkable; his power of observation in matters of dress, actions, and character is surprising; his very "naif and imperturbable persistency, . . . and even the abnegation of all personal dignity" all show his genius. It was this last characteristic, his persistency in word and deed, that gave Macaulay an excuse for the epithets he

used. "Who is this Scotch cur at Johnson's heels?" some one asked. "He is not a cur," Goldsmith replied; "he is only a bur." The better we know this bur, this cur, this dunce, this parasite, this coxcomb, the more respect we have for his ability and the more surely we appreciate the justice of his being called the *prince of biographers*.

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2. *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, by his nephew, Sir George Otto Trevelyan, is the best biography of Macaulay and one of the best biographies in English; it was published by Harper's in America in 1876 and in a new edition in two volumes in 1908.

3. The *Life of Macaulay* in the English Men of Letters series is by J. Cotter Morison; it is much briefer than Trevelyan's but excellent of its kind.

4. Innumerable good essays have been published. Among them are Mark Pattison's in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*; Saintsbury's in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*; Leslie Stephen's in the *Dictionary of National Biography* and in *Hours in a Library*; John Morley's in *Critical Miscellanies*; Walter Bagehot's in *Literary Studies*. The best general discussion of Macaulay's style is probably that in Minto's *English Prose Writers*.

B. Johnson

1. To give a comprehensive bibliography of Johnson would require a large volume in itself. The standard work upon Johnson's life is, of course, Boswell's *Life*. The edition by G. Birkbeck Hill, Clarendon, six volumes, is the best.

2. Mrs. Piozzi's *Anecdotes* and *Letters* are helpful adjuncts to Boswell, as is Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*.

3. The best recent short life is that by Leslie Stephen in the *English Men of Letters* series.

4. The essays are innumerable. Worthy of special mention beside Macaulay's *Review of Croker's Edition* and Carlyle's *Essay on Croker's Boswell* are the one by Leslie Stephen in *Hours in a Library*, Vol. II, and the one by Gosse in *18th Century Literature*.

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C. Boswell

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THE LIFE OF SAMUEL JOHNSON

1709–1784

1. Samuel Johnson, one of the most eminent English writers of the eighteenth century, was the son of Michael Johnson, who was, at the beginning of that century, a magistrate of Lichfield, and a bookseller of great note in the midland counties. Michael's abilities and attainments seem to have been considerable. He was so well acquainted with the contents of the volumes which he exposed to sale, that the country rectors of Staffordshire and Worcestershire thought him an oracle on points of learning. Between him and the clergy, indeed, there was a strong religious and political sympathy. He was a zealous churchman, and, though he had qualified himself for municipal office by taking the oaths to the sovereigns in possession, was to the last a Jacobite in heart. At his house, a house which is still pointed out to every traveller who visits Lichfield, Samuel was born on the 18th of September, 1709. In the child, the physical, intellectual, and moral peculiarities which afterwards distinguished the man were plainly discernible, — great muscular strength, accompanied by much awkwardness and many infirmities; great quickness of parts, with a morbid propensity to

sloth and procrastination ; a kind and generous heart, with a gloomy and irritable temper. He had inherited from his ancestors a scrofulous taint, which it was beyond the power of medicine to remove. His parents were weak enough to believe that the royal touch was a specific for this malady. In his third year he was taken up to London, inspected by the court surgeon, prayed over by the court chaplains, and stroked and presented with a piece of gold by Queen Anne. One of his earliest recollections was that of a stately lady in a diamond stomacher and a long black hood. Her hand was applied in vain. The boy's features, which were originally noble and not irregular, were distorted by his malady. His cheeks were deeply scarred. He lost for a time the sight of one eye ; and he saw but very imperfectly with the other. But the force of his mind overcame every impediment. Indolent as he was, he acquired knowledge with such ease and rapidity that at every school to which he was sent he was soon the best scholar. From sixteen to eighteen he resided at home, and was left to his own devices. He learned much at this time, though his studies were without guidance and without plan. He ransacked his father's shelves, dipped into a multitude of books, read what was interesting, and passed over what was dull. An ordinary lad would have acquired little or no useful knowledge in such a way ; but much that was dull to ordinary lads was interesting to Samuel. He read little Greek, for his proficiency in that language was not such that he could take much pleasure in the masters of Attic poetry and

BIRTHPLACE AND STATUE OF DR. JOHNSON NEAR LICHFIELD

eloquence. But he had left school a good Latinist, and he soon acquired, in the large and miscellaneous library of which he now had the command, an extensive knowledge of Latin literature. That Augustan delicacy of taste, which is the boast of the great public schools of England, he never possessed. But he was early familiar with some classical writers, who were quite unknown to the best scholars in the sixth form at Eton. He was peculiarly attracted by the works of the great restorers of learning. Once, while searching for some apples, he found a huge folio volume of Petrarch's works. The name excited his curiosity, and he eagerly devoured hundreds of pages. Indeed, the diction and versification of his own Latin compositions show that he had paid at least as much attention to modern copies from the antique as to the original models.

2. While he was thus irregularly educating himself, his family was sinking into hopeless poverty. Old Michael Johnson was much better qualified to pore upon books, and to talk about them, than to trade in them. His business declined; his debts increased; it was with difficulty that the daily expenses of his household were defrayed. It was out of his power to support his son at either university, but a wealthy neighbor offered assistance; and, in reliance on promises which proved to be of very little value, Samuel was entered at Pembroke College, Oxford. When the young scholar presented himself to the rulers of that society, they were amazed not more by his ungainly figure and eccentric manners than by the quantity of

extensive and curious information which he had picked up during many months of desultory but not unprofitable study. On the first day of his residence, he surprised his teachers by quoting Macrobius; and one of the most learned among them declared that he had never known a freshman of equal attainments.

3. At Oxford, Johnson resided during about three years. He was poor, even to raggedness; and his appearance excited a mirth and a pity which were equally intolerable to his haughty spirit. He was driven from the quadrangle of Christ Church by the sneering looks which the members of that aristocratical society cast at the holes in his shoes. Some charitable person placed a new pair at his door; but he spurned them away in a fury. Distress made him, not servile, but reckless and ungovernable. No opulent gentleman commoner, panting for one-and-twenty, could have treated the academical authorities with more gross disrespect. The needy scholar was generally to be seen under the gate of Pembroke, a gate now adorned with his effigy, haranguing a circle of lads, over whom, in spite of his tattered gown and dirty linen, his wit and audacity gave him an undisputed ascendency. In every mutiny against the discipline of the college he was the ringleader. Much was pardoned, however, to a youth so highly distinguished by abilities and acquirements. He had early made himself known by turning Pope's "Messiah" into Latin verse. The style and rhythm, indeed, were not exactly Virgilian;

but the translation found many admirers, and was read with pleasure by Pope himself.

4. The time drew near at which Johnson would, in the ordinary course of things, have become a Bachelor of Arts ; but he was at the end of his resources. Those promises of support on which he had relied had not been kept. His family could do nothing for him. His debts to Oxford tradesmen were small indeed, yet larger than he could pay. In the autumn of 1731 he was under the necessity of quitting the university without a degree. In the following winter his father died. The old man left but a pittance ; and of that pittance almost the whole was appropriated to the support of his widow. The property to which Samuel succeeded amounted to no more than twenty pounds.

5. His life, during the thirty years which followed, was one hard struggle with poverty. The misery of that struggle needed no aggravation, but was aggravated by the sufferings of an unsound body and an unsound mind. Before the young man left the university, his hereditary malady had broken forth in a singularly cruel form. He had become an incurable hypochondriac. He said long after that he had been mad all his life, or at least not perfectly sane ; and, in truth, eccentricities less strange than his have often been thought grounds sufficient for absolving felons, and for setting aside wills. His grimaces, his gestures, his mutterings, sometimes diverted and sometimes terrified people who did not know him. At a dinner-table he would, in a fit of absence, stoop down and

twitch off a lady's shoe. He would amaze a drawing-room by suddenly ejaculating a clause of the Lord's Prayer. He would conceive an unintelligible aversion to a particular alley, and perform a great circuit rather than see the hateful place. He would set his heart on touching every post in the streets through which he walked. If by any chance he missed a post, he would go back a hundred yards and repair the omission. Under the influence of his disease his senses became morbidly torpid, and his imagination morbidly active. At one time he would stand poring on the town clock without being able to tell the hour. At another, he would distinctly hear his mother, who was many miles off, calling him by his name. But this was not the worst. A deep melancholy took possession of him, and gave a dark tinge to all his views of human nature and of human destiny. Such wretchedness as he endured has driven many men to shoot themselves or drown themselves. But he was under no temptation to commit suicide. He was sick of life; but he was afraid of death; and he shuddered at every sight or sound which reminded him of the inevitable hour. In religion he found but little comfort during his long and frequent fits of dejection; for his religion partook of his own character. The light from heaven shone on him indeed, but not in a direct line, or with its own pure splendor. The rays had to struggle through a disturbing medium: they reached him refracted, dulled, and discolored by the thick gloom which had settled on his soul, and, though they might be sufficiently clear to guide him, were too dim to cheer him.

6. With such infirmities of body and of mind, this celebrated man was left, at two-and-twenty, to fight his way through the world. He remained during about five years in the midland counties. At Lichfield, his birthplace and his early home, he had inherited some friends, and acquired others. He was kindly noticed by Henry Hervey, a gay officer of noble family, who happened to be quartered there. Gilbert Walmesley, registrar of the ecclesiastical court of the diocese, a man of distinguished parts, learning, and knowledge of the world, did himself honor by patronizing the young adventurer, whose repulsive person, unpolished manners, and squalid garb, moved many of the petty aristocracy of the neighborhood to laughter or to disgust. At Lichfield, however, Johnson could find no way of earning a livelihood. He became usher of a grammar school in Leicestershire ; he resided as a humble companion in the house of a country gentleman ; but a life of dependence was insupportable to his haughty spirit. He repaired to Birmingham, and there earned a few guineas by literary drudgery. In that town he printed a translation, little noticed at the time, and long forgotten, of a Latin book about Abyssinia. He then put forth proposals for publishing by subscription the poems of Politian, with notes containing a history of modern Latin verse ; but subscriptions did not come in, and the volume never appeared.

7. While leading this vagrant and miserable life, Johnson fell in love. The object of his passion was Mrs. Elizabeth Porter, a widow who had children as

old as himself. To ordinary spectators, the lady appeared to be a short, fat, coarse woman, painted half an inch thick, dressed in gaudy colors, and fond of exhibiting provincial airs and graces which were not exactly those of the Queensberrys and Lepels. To Johnson, however, whose passions were strong, whose eyesight was too weak to distinguish ceruse from natural bloom, and who had seldom or never been in the same room with a woman of real fashion, his Titty, as he called her, was the most beautiful, graceful, and accomplished of her sex. That his admiration was unfeigned cannot be doubted ; for she was as poor as himself. She accepted, with a readiness which did her little honor, the addresses of a suitor who might have been her son. The marriage, however, in spite of occasional wranglings, proved happier than might have been expected. The lover continued to be under the illusions of the wedding-day till the lady died in her sixty-fourth year. On her monument he placed an inscription extolling the charms of her person and of her manners ; and when, long after her decease, he had occasion to mention her, he exclaimed, with a tenderness half ludicrous, half pathetic, " Pretty creature ! "

8. His marriage made it necessary for him to exert himself more strenuously than he had hitherto done. He took a house in the nighborhood of his native town, and advertised for pupils. But eighteen months passed away, and only three pupils came to his academy. Indeed, his appearance was so strange, and his temper so violent, that his schoolroom must have resembled an

ogre's den. Nor was the tawdry, painted grandmother whom he called his Titty, well qualified to make provision for the comfort of young gentlemen. David Garrick, who was one of the pupils, used many years later to throw the best company of London into convulsions of laughter by mimicking the endearments of this extraordinary pair.

9. At length Johnson, in the twenty-eighth year of his age, determined to seek his fortune in the capital as a literary adventurer. He set out with a few guineas, three acts of the tragedy of "Irene" in manuscript, and two or three letters of introduction from his friend Walmesley.

10. Never since literature became a calling in England had it been a less gainful calling than at the time when Johnson took up his residence in London. In the preceding generation, a writer of eminent merit was sure to be munificently rewarded by the government. The least that he could expect was a pension or a sinecure place; and, if he showed any aptitude for politics, he might hope to be a member of parliament, a lord of the treasury, an ambassador, a secretary of state. It would be easy, on the other hand, to name several writers of the nineteenth century of whom the least successful has received forty thousand pounds from the booksellers. But Johnson entered on his vocation in the most dreary part of the dreary interval which separated two ages of prosperity. Literature had ceased to flourish under the patronage of the great, and had not begun to flourish under the patronage of the

public. One man of letters, indeed, Pope, had acquired by his pen what was then considered as a handsome fortune, and lived on a footing of equality with nobles and ministers of state. But this was a solitary exception. Even an author whose reputation was established, and whose works were popular; such an author as Thomson, whose "Seasons" were in every library; such an author as Fielding, whose "Pasquin" had had a greater run than any drama since the "Beggars' Opera," was sometimes glad to obtain, by pawning his best coat, the means of dining on tripe at a cookshop underground, where he could wipe his hands, after his greasy meal, on the back of a Newfoundland dog. It is easy, therefore, to imagine what humiliations and privations must have awaited the novice who had still to earn a name. One of the publishers to whom Johnson applied for employment, measured with a scornful eye that athletic, though uncouth, frame, and exclaimed, "You had better get a porter's knot, and carry trunks." Nor was the advice bad; for a porter was likely to be as plentifully fed, and as comfortably lodged, as a poet.

11. Some time appears to have elapsed before Johnson was able to form any literary connection from which he could expect more than bread for the day which was passing over him. He never forgot the generosity with which Hervey, who was now residing in London, relieved his wants during his time of trial. "Harry Hervey," said the old philosopher many years later, "was a vicious man; but he was very kind to me. If you call a dog Hervey, I shall love him." At

Hervey's table Johnson sometimes enjoyed feasts which were made more agreeable by contrast. But in general he dined, and thought that he dined well, on sixpennyworth of meat and a pennyworth of bread at an alehouse near Drury Lane.

12. The effect of the privations and sufferings which he endured at this time was discernible to the last in his temper and his deportment. His manners had never been courtly. They now became almost savage. Being frequently under the necessity of wearing shabby coats and dirty shirts, he became a confirmed sloven. Being often very hungry when he sat down to his meals, he contracted a habit of eating with ravenous greediness. Even to the end of his life, and even at the tables of the great, the sight of food affected him as it affects wild beasts and birds of prey. His taste in cookery, formed in subterranean ordinaries and *à la mode* beefshops, was far from delicate. Whenever he was so fortunate as to have near him a hare that had been kept too long, or a meat-pie made with rancid butter, he gorged himself with such violence that his veins swelled, and the moisture broke out on his forehead. The affronts which his poverty emboldened stupid and low-minded men to offer to him, would have broken a mean spirit into sycophancy, but made him rude even to ferocity. Unhappily the insolence which, while it was defensive, was pardonable, and in some sense respectable, accompanied him into societies where he was treated with courtesy and kindness. He was repeatedly provoked into striking those who had

taken liberties with him. All the sufferers, however, were wise enough to abstain from talking about their beatings, except Osborne, the most rapacious and brutal of booksellers, who proclaimed everywhere that he had been knocked down by the huge fellow whom he had hired to puff the Harleian Library.

13. About a year after Johnson had begun to reside in London, he was fortunate enough to obtain regular employment from Cave, an enterprising and intelligent bookseller, who was proprietor and editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine.* That journal, just entering on the ninth year of its long existence, was the only periodical work in the kingdom which then had what would now be called a large circulation. It was, indeed, the chief source of parliamentary intelligence. It was not then safe, even during a recess, to publish an account of the proceedings of either House without some disguise. Cave, however, ventured to entertain his readers with what he called Reports of the Debates of the Senate of Lilliput. France was Blefuscu ; London was Mildendo ; pounds were sprugs ; the Duke of Newcastle was the Nardac Secretary of State ; Lord Hardwicke was the Hurgo Hickrad ; and William Pulteney was Wingul Pulnub. To write the speeches was, during several years, the business of Johnson. He was generally furnished with notes, meagre, indeed, and inaccurate, of what had been said ; but sometimes he had to find arguments and eloquence both for the ministry and for the opposition. He was himself a Tory, not from rational conviction, — for his serious

opinion was that one form of government was just as good or as bad as another, — but from mere passion, such as inflamed the Capulets against the Montagues, or the Blues of the Roman circus against the Greens. In his infancy he had heard so much talk about the villainies of the Whigs, and the dangers of the Church, that he had become a furious partisan when he could scarcely speak. Before he was three he had insisted on being taken to hear Sacheverell preach at Lichfield Cathedral, and had listened to the sermon with as much respect, and probably with as much intelligence, as any Staffordshire squire in the congregation. The work which had been begun in the nursery had been completed by the university. Oxford, when Johnson resided there, was the most Jacobitical place in England; and Pembroke was one of the most Jacobitical colleges in Oxford. The prejudices which he brought up to London were scarcely less absurd than those of his own "Tom Tempest." Charles II and James II were two of the best kings that ever reigned. Laud, a poor creature who never did, said, or wrote anything indicating more than the ordinary capacity of an old woman, was a prodigy of parts and learning over whose tomb Art and Genius still continued to weep. Hampden deserved no more honorable name than that of "the zealot of rebellion." Even the ship money, condemned not less decidedly by Falkland and Clarendon than by the bitterest Roundheads, Johnson would not pronounce to have been an unconstitutional impost. Under a government the mildest that had ever been

known in the world — under a government which allowed to the people an unprecedented liberty of speech and action, he fancied that he was a slave ; he assailed the ministry with obloquy which refuted itself, and regretted the lost freedom and happiness of those golden days in which a writer who had taken but one-tenth part of the license allowed to him, would have been pilloried, mangled with the shears, whipped at the cart's tail, and flung into a noisome dungeon to die. He hated dissenters and stock-jobbers, the excise and the army, septennial parliaments, and continental connections. He long had an aversion to the Scotch, an aversion of which he could not remember the commencement, but which, he owned, had probably originated in his abhorrence of the conduct of the nation during the Great Rebellion. It is easy to guess in what manner debates on great party questions were likely to be reported by a man whose judgment was so much disordered by party spirit. A show of fairness was indeed necessary to the prosperity of the *Magazine*. But Johnson long afterwards owned that, though he had saved appearances, he had taken care that the Whig dogs should not have the best of it ; and, in fact, every passage which has lived, every passage which bears the marks of his higher faculties, is put into the mouth of some member of the opposition.

14. A few weeks after Johnson had entered on these obscure labors, he published a work which at once placed him high among the writers of his age. It is probable that what he had suffered during his first

year in London had often reminded him of some parts of that noble poem in which Juvenal has described the misery and degradation of a needy man of letters, lodged among the pigeons' nests in the tottering garrets that overhung the streets of Rome. Pope's admirable imitations of Horace's "Satires" and "Epistles" had recently appeared, were in every hand, and were by many readers thought superior to the originals. What Pope had done for Horace, Johnson aspired to do for Juvenal. The enterprise was bold, and yet judicious. For between Johnson and Juvenal there was much in common, much more certainly than between Pope and Horace.

15. Johnson's "London" appeared without his name in May, 1738. He received only ten guineas for this stately and vigorous poem; but the sale was rapid, and the success complete. A second edition was required within a week. Those small critics who are always desirous to lower established reputations ran about proclaiming that the anonymous satirist was superior to Pope in Pope's own peculiar department of literature. It ought to be remembered, to the honor of Pope, that he joined heartily in the applause with which the appearance of a rival genius was welcomed. He made inquiries about the author of "London." Such a man, he said, could not be long concealed. The name was soon discovered; and Pope, with great kindness, exerted himself to obtain an academical degree and the mastership of a grammar school for the poor young poet. The attempt failed, and Johnson remained a bookseller's hack.

16. It does not appear that these two men, the most eminent writer of the generation which was going out, and the most eminent writer of the generation which was coming in, ever saw each other. They lived in very different circles ; one surrounded by dukes and earls, the other by starving pamphleteers and index-makers. Among Johnson's associates at this time may be mentioned Boyse, who, when his shirts were pledged, scrawled Latin verses sitting up in bed with his arms through two holes in his blanket ; who composed very respectable sacred poetry when he was sober, and who was at last run over by a hackney coach when he was drunk ; Hoole, surnamed the metaphysical tailor, who, instead of attending to his measures, used to trace geometrical diagrams on the board where he sat cross-legged ; and the penitent imposter, George Psalmanazar, who, after poring all day, in a humble lodging, on the folios of Jewish rabbis and Christian fathers, indulged himself at night with literary and theological conversation at an alehouse in the city. But the most remarkable of the persons with whom at this time Johnson consorted, was Richard Savage, an earl's son, a shoemaker's apprentice, who had seen life in all its forms, who had feasted among blue ribands in St. James's Square, and had lain with fifty pounds weight of irons on his legs in the condemned ward of Newgate. This man had, after many vicissitudes of fortune, sunk at last into abject and hopeless poverty. His pen had failed him. His patrons had been taken away by death, or estranged by the riotous profusion

with which he squandered their bounty, and the ungrateful insolence with which he rejected their advice. He now lived by begging. He dined on venison and champagne whenever he had been so fortunate as to borrow a guinea. If his questing had been unsuccessful, he appeased the rage of hunger with some scraps of broken meat, and lay down to rest under the Piazza of Covent Garden in warm weather, and in cold weather as near as he could get to the furnace of a glass-house. Yet, in his misery, he was still an agreeable companion. He had an inexhaustible store of anecdotes about that gay and brilliant world from which he was now an outcast. He had observed the great men of both parties in hours of careless relaxation ; had seen the leaders of opposition without the mask of patriotism ; and had heard the prime minister roar with laughter, and tell stories not over decent. During some months Savage lived in the closest familiarity with Johnson ; and then the friends parted, not without tears. Johnson remained in London to drudge for Cave. Savage went to the west of England ; lived there as he had lived everywhere ; and, in 1743, died, penniless and heart-broken, in Bristol jail.

17. Soon after his death, while the public curiosity was strongly excited about his extraordinary character, and his not less extraordinary adventures, a life of him appeared, widely different from the catchpenny lives of eminent men which were then a staple article of manufacture in Grub Street. The style was indeed deficient in ease and variety ; and the writer was evi-

dently too partial to the Latin element of our language. But the little work, with all its faults, was a masterpiece. No finer specimen of literary biography existed in any language, living or dead ; and a discerning critic might have confidently predicted that the author was destined to be the founder of a new school of English eloquence.

18. The " Life of Savage " was anonymous ; but it was well known in literary circles that Johnson was the writer. During the three years which followed, he produced no important work ; but he was not, and indeed could not be, idle. The fame of his abilities and learning continued to grow. Warburton pronounced him a man of parts and genius ; and the praise of Warburton was then no light thing. Such was Johnson's reputation, that, in 1747, several eminent booksellers combined to employ him in the arduous work of preparing a Dictionary of the English Language in two folio volumes. The sum which they agreed to pay him was only fifteen hundred guineas ; and out of this sum he had to pay several poor men of letters who assisted him in the humbler parts of his task.

19. The prospectus of the Dictionary he addressed to the Earl of Chesterfield. Chesterfield had long been celebrated for the politeness of his manners, the brilliancy of his wit, and the delicacy of his taste. He was acknowledged to be the finest speaker in the House of Lords. He had recently governed Ireland, at a momentous conjuncture, with eminent firmness, wisdom, and humanity, and he had since become Secretary

of State. He received Johnson's homage with the most winning affability, and requited it with a few guineas, bestowed doubtless in a very graceful manner, but was by no means desirous to see all his carpets blackened with the London mud, and his soups and wines thrown to right and left over the gowns of fine ladies and the waistcoats of fine gentlemen, by an absent, awkward scholar, who gave strange starts, and uttered strange growls, who dressed like a scarecrow, and ate like a cormorant. During some time Johnson continued to call on his patron; but, after being repeatedly told by the porter that his lordship was not at home, took the hint, and ceased to present himself at the inhospitable door.

20 Johnson had flattered himself that he should have completed his Dictionary by the end of 1750; but it was not till 1755 that he at length gave his huge volumes to the world. During the seven years which he passed in the drudgery of penning definitions and marking quotations for transcription, he sought for relaxation in literary labor of a more agreeable kind. In 1749 he published the "Vanity of Human Wishes," an excellent imitation of the Tenth Satire of Juvenal. It is, in truth, not easy to say whether the palm belongs to the ancient or to the modern poet. The couplets in which the fall of Wolsey is described, though lofty and sonorous, are feeble when compared with the wonderful lines which bring before us all Rome in tumult on the day of the fall of Sejanus, the laurels on the doorposts, the white bull stalking towards the

Capitol, the statues rolling down from their pedestals, the flatterers of the disgraced minister running to see him dragged with a hook through the streets, and to have a kick at his carcass before it is hurled into the Tiber. It must be owned, too, that in the concluding passage the Christian moralist has not made the most of his advantages, and has fallen decidedly short of the sublimity of his Pagan model. On the other hand, Juvenal's Hannibal must yield to Johnson's Charles ; and Johnson's vigorous and pathetic enumeration of the miseries of a literary life must be allowed to be superior to Juvenal's lamentation over the fate of Demosthenes and Cicero.

21. For the copyright of the "Vanity of Human Wishes" Johnson received only fifteen guineas.

22. A few days after the publication of this poem, his tragedy, begun many years before, was brought on the stage. His pupil, David Garrick, had, in 1741, made his appearance on a humble stage in Goodman's Fields, had at once risen to the first place among actors, and was now, after several years of almost uninterrupted success, manager of Drury Lane Theatre. The relation between him and his old preceptor was of a very singular kind. They repelled each other strongly, and yet attracted each other strongly. Nature had made them of very different clay ; and circumstances had fully brought out the natural peculiarities of both. Sudden prosperity had turned Garrick's head. Continued adversity had soured Johnson's temper. Johnson saw, with more envy than became so great a man, the villa,

the plate, the china, the Brussels carpet, which the little mimic had got by repeating, with grimaces and gesticulations, what wiser men had written ; and the exquisitely sensitive vanity of Garrick was galled by the thought that, while all the rest of the world was applauding him, he could obtain from one morose cynic, whose opinion it was impossible to despise, scarcely any compliment not acidulated with scorn. Yet the two Lichfield men had so many early recollections in common, and sympathized with each other on so many points on which they sympathized with nobody else in the vast population of the capital, that, though the master was often provoked by the monkey-like impertinence of the pupil, and the pupil by the bearish rudeness of the master, they remained friends till they were parted by death. Garrick now brought "Irene" out, with alterations sufficient to displease the author, yet not sufficient to make the piece pleasing to the audience. The public, however, listened with little emotion, but with much civility, to five acts of monotonous declamation. After nine representations the play was withdrawn. It is, indeed, altogether unsuited to the stage, and, even when perused in the closet, will be found hardly worthy of the author. He had not the slightest notion of what blank verse should be. A change in the last syllable of every other line would make the versification of the "Vanity of Human Wishes" closely resemble the versification of "Irene." The poet, however, cleared, by his benefit-nights, and by the sale of the copyright of his

tragedy, about three hundred pounds, then a great sum in his estimation.

23. About a year after the representation of "Irene," he began to publish a series of short essays on morals, manners, and literature. This species of composition had been brought into fashion by the success of the *Tatler*, and by the still more brilliant success of the *Spectator*. A crowd of small writers had vainly attempted to rival Addison. The *Lay Monastery*, the *Censor*, the *Freethinker*, the *Plain Dealer*, the *Champion*, and other works of the same kind, had had their short day. None of them had obtained a permanent place in our literature ; and they are now to be found only in the libraries of the curious. At length Johnson undertook the adventure in which so many aspirants had failed. In the thirty-sixth year after the appearance of the last number of the *Spectator*, appeared the first number of the *Rambler*. From March, 1750, to March, 1752, this paper continued to come out every Tuesday and Saturday.

24. From the first the *Rambler* was enthusiastically admired by a few eminent men. Richardson, when only five numbers had appeared, pronounced it equal, if not superior, to the *Spectator*. Young and Hartley expressed their approbation not less warmly. Bubb Dodington, among whose many faults indifference to the claims of genius and learning cannot be reckoned, solicited the acquaintance of the writer. In consequence probably of the good offices of Dodington, who was then the confidential adviser of Prince Frederick,

two of his Royal Highness's gentlemen carried a gracious message to the printing-office, and ordered seven copies for Leicester House. But these overtures seem to have been very coldly received. Johnson had had enough of the patronage of the great to last him all his life, and was not disposed to haunt any other door as he had haunted the door of Chesterfield.

25. By the public the *Rambler* was at first very coldly received. Though the price of a number was only twopence, the sale did not amount to five hundred. The profits were therefore very small. But as soon as the flying leaves were collected and reprinted they became popular. The author lived to see thirteen thousand copies spread over England alone. Separate editions were published for the Scotch and Irish markets. A large party pronounced the style perfect, so absolutely perfect that in some essays it would be impossible for the writer himself to alter a single word for the better. Another party, not less numerous, vehemently accused him of having corrupted the purity of the English tongue. The best critics admitted that his diction was too monotonous, too obviously artificial, and now and then turgid even to absurdity. But they did justice to the acuteness of his observations on morals and manners, to the constant precision and frequent brilliancy of his language, to the weighty and magnificent eloquence of many serious passages and to the solemn yet pleasing humor of some of the lighter papers. On the question of precedence between Addison and Johnson, a question which, seventy years

ago, was much disputed, posterity has pronounced a decision from which there is no appeal. Sir Roger, his chaplain and his butler, Will Wimble and Will Honeycomb, the Vision of Mirza, the Journal of the Retired Citizen, the Everlasting Club, the Dunmow Flitch, the Loves of Hilpah and Shalum, the Visit to the Exchange, and the Visit to the Abbey, are known to everybody. But many men and women, even of highly cultivated minds, are unacquainted with Squire Bluster and Mrs. Busy, Quisquilius and Venustulus, the Allegory of Wit and Learning, the Chronicle of the Revolutions of a Garret, and the sad fate of Aningait and Ajut.

26. The last *Rambler* was written in a sad and gloomy hour. Mrs. Johnson had been given over by the physicians. Three days later she died. She left her husband almost broken-hearted. Many people had been surprised to see a man of his genius and learning stooping to every drudgery, and denying himself almost every comfort, for the purpose of supplying a silly, affected old woman with superfluities, which she accepted with but little gratitude. But all his affection had been concentrated on her. He had neither brother nor sister, neither son nor daughter. To him she was beautiful as the Gunnings, and witty as Lady Mary. Her opinion of his writings was more important to him than the voice of the pit of Drury Lane Theatre, or the judgment of the *Monthly Review*. The chief support which had sustained him through the most arduous labor of his life was the hope that she would

enjoy the fame and the profit which he anticipated from his Dictionary. She was gone; and in that vast labyrinth of streets, peopled by eight hundred thousand human beings, he was alone. Yet it was necessary for him to set himself, as he expressed it, doggedly to work. After three more laborious years, the Dictionary was at length complete.

27. It had been generally supposed that this great work would be dedicated to the eloquent and accomplished nobleman to whom the Prospectus had been addressed. He well knew the value of such a compliment; and therefore, when the day of publication drew near, he exerted himself to soothe, by a show of zealous and at the same time of delicate and judicious kindness, the pride which he had so cruelly wounded. Since the *Ramblers* had ceased to appear, the town had been entertained by a journal called *The World*, to which many men of high rank and fashion contributed. In two successive numbers of *The World*, the Dictionary was, to use the modern phrase, puffed with wonderful skill. The writings of Johnson were warmly praised. It was proposed that he should be invested with the authority of a Dictator, nay, of a Pope, over our language, and that his decisions about the meaning and the spelling of words should be received as final. His two folios, it was said, would of course be bought by everybody who could afford to buy them. It was soon known that these papers were written by Chesterfield. But the just resentment of Johnson was not to be so appeased. In a letter written with singular energy and

dignity of thought and language, he repelled the tardy advances of his patron. The Dictionary came forth without a dedication. In the preface the author truly declared that he owed nothing to the great, and described the difficulties with which he had been left to struggle so forcibly and pathetically, that the ablest and most malevolent of all the enemies of his fame, Horne Tooke, never could read that passage without tears.

28. The public, on this occasion, did Johnson full justice, and something more than justice. The best lexicographer may well be content if his productions are received by the world with cold esteem. But Johnson's Dictionary was hailed with an enthusiasm such as no similar work has ever excited. It was, indeed, the first dictionary which could be read with pleasure. The definitions show so much acuteness of thought and command of language, and the passages quoted from poets, divines, and philosophers are so skilfully selected, that a leisure hour may always be very agreeably spent in turning over the pages. The faults of the book resolve themselves, for the most part, into one great fault. Johnson was a wretched etymologist. He knew little or nothing of any Teutonic language except English, which, indeed, as he wrote it, was scarcely a Teutonic language ; and thus he was absolutely at the mercy of Junius and Skinner.

29. The Dictionary, though it raised Johnson's fame, added nothing to his pecuniary means. The fifteen hundred guineas which the booksellers had

agreed to pay him nad been advanced and spent before the last sheets issued from the press. It is painful to relate that, twice in the course of the year which followed the publication of this great work, he was arrested and carried to spunging-houses, and that he was twice indebted for his liberty to his excellent friend Richardson. It was still necessary for the man who had been formally saluted by the highest authority as Dictator of the English language to supply his wants by constant toil. He abridged his Dictionary. He proposed to bring out an edition of Shakespeare by subscription ; and many subscribers sent in their names, and laid down their money. But he soon found the task so little to his taste, that he turned to more attractive employments. He contributed many papers to a new monthly journal, which was called the *Literary Magazine*. Few of these papers have much interest ; but among them was the very best thing that he ever wrote, a masterpiece both of reasoning and of satirical pleasantry, the review of Jenyns's "Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil."

30. In the spring of 1758 Johnson put forth the first of a series of essays, entitled the *Idler*. During two years these essays continued to appear weekly. They were eagerly read, widely circulated, and, indeed, impudently pirated, while they were still in the original form, and had a large sale when collected into volumes. The *Idler* may be described as a second part of the *Rambler*, somewhat livelier and somewhat weaker than the first part.

JOHNSON'S HOME IN THE TEMPLE

31. While Johnson was busied with his *Idlers*, his mother, who had accomplished her ninetieth year, died at Lichfield. It was long since he had seen her ; but he had not failed to contribute largely, out of his small means, to her comfort. In order to defray the charges of her funeral, and to pay some debts which she had left, he wrote a little book in a single week, and sent off the sheets to the press without reading them over. A hundred pounds were paid him for the copyright ; and the purchasers had great cause to be pleased with their bargain, for the book was " Rasselas."

32. The success of " Rasselas " was great, though such ladies as Miss Lydia Languish must have been grievously disappointed when they found that the new volume from the circulating library was little more than a dissertation on the author's favorite theme, the Vanity of Human Wishes ; that the Prince of Abyssinia was without a mistress, and the Princess without a lover ; and that the story set the hero and the heroine down exactly where it had taken them up. The style was the subject of much eager controversy. The *Monthly Review* and the *Critical Review* took different sides. Many readers pronounced the writer a pompous pedant, who would never use a word of two syllables where it was possible to use a word of six, and who could not make a waiting-woman relate her adventures without balancing every noun with another noun, and every epithet with another epithet. Another party, not less zealous, cited with delight numerous passages in which

weighty meaning was expressed with accuracy and illustrated with splendor. And both the censure and the praise were merited.

33. About the plan of "Rasselas" little was said by the critics; and yet the faults of the plan might seem to invite severe criticism. Johnson has frequently blamed Shakespeare for neglecting the proprieties of time and place, and for ascribing to one age or nation the manners and opinions of another. Yet Shakespeare has not sinned in this way more grievously than Johnson. Rasselas and Imlac, Nekayah and Pekuah, are evidently meant to be Abyssinians of the eighteenth century — for the Europe which Imlac describes is the Europe of the eighteenth century — and the inmates of the Happy Valley talk familiarly of that law of gravitation which Newton discovered, and which was not fully received even at Cambridge till the eighteenth century. What a real company of Abyssinians would have been may be learned from "Bruce's Travels." But Johnson, not content with turning filthy savages, ignorant of their letters, and gorged with raw steaks cut from living cows, into philosophers as eloquent and enlightened as himself or his friend Burke, and into ladies as highly accomplished as Mrs. Lennox or Mrs. Sheridan, transferred the whole domestic system of England to Egypt. Into a land of harems, a land of polygamy, a land where women are married without ever being seen, he introduced the flirtations and jealousies of our ballrooms. In a land where there is boundless liberty of divorce, wedlock is

described as the indissoluble compact. "A youth and maiden meeting by chance, or brought together by artifice, exchange glances, reciprocate civilities, go home and dream of each other. Such," says Rasselas, "is the common process of marriage." Such it may have been, and may still be, in London, but assuredly not at Cairo. A writer who was guilty of such improprieties had little right to blame the poet who made Hector quote Aristotle, and represented Julio Romano as flourishing in the days of the oracle of Delphi.

34. By such exertions as have been described, Johnson supported himself till the year 1762. In that year a great change in his circumstances took place. He had from a child been an enemy of the reigning dynasty. His Jacobite prejudices had been exhibited with little disguise both in his works and in his conversation. Even in his massy and elaborate Dictionary he had, with a strange want of taste and judgment, inserted bitter and contumelious reflections on the Whig party. The excise, which was a favorite resource of Whig financiers, he had designated as a hateful tax. He had railed against the commissioners of excise in language so coarse that they had seriously thought of prosecuting him. He had with difficulty been prevented from holding up the Lord Privy Seal by name as an example of the meaning of the word "renegade." A pension he had defined as pay given to a state hireling to betray his country; a pensioner as a slave of state hired by a stipend to obey a master. It seemed unlikely that the author of these definitions would himself be pensioned.

But that was a time of wonders. George the Third had ascended the throne ; and had, in the course of a few months, disgusted many of the old friends, and conciliated many of the old enemies of his house. The city was becoming mutinous ; Oxford was becoming loyal. Cavendishes and Bentincks were murmuring. Somersets and Wyndhams were hastening to kiss hands. The head of the treasury was now Lord Bute, who was a Tory, and could have no objection to Johnson's Toryism. Bute wished to be thought a patron of men of letters ; and Johnson was one of the most eminent and one of the most needy men of letters in Europe. A pension of three hundred a year was graciously offered, and with very little hesitation accepted.

35. This event produced a change in Johnson s whole way of life. For the first time since his boyhood he no longer felt the daily goad urging him to the daily toil. He was at liberty, after thirty years of anxiety and drudgery, to indulge his constitutional indolence ; to lie in bed till two in the afternoon, and to sit up talking till four in the morning, without fearing either the printer's devil or the sheriff's officer.

36. One laborious task indeed he had bound himself to perform. He had received large subscriptions for his promised edition of Shakespeare ; he had lived on those subscriptions during some years ; and he could not without disgrace omit to perform his part of the contract. His friends repeatedly exhorted him to make an effort ; and he repeatedly resolved to do so. But, notwithstanding their exhortations and his resolu-

from, month followed month, year followed year, and nothing was done. He prayed fervently against his idleness. He determined, as often as he received the sacrament, that he would no longer close away and trifle away his time; but the spell under which he lay resisted prayer and sacrament. His private notes at this time are made up of self-reproaches. "My indolence," he wrote on Easter Eve in 1761, "has sunk into grosser sluggishness. A kind of strange oblivion has overspread me, so that I know not what has become of the last year." Easter, 1763, came, and found him still in the same state. "My time," he wrote, "has been unprofitably spent and seems as a dream that has left nothing behind. My memory grows confused, and I know not how the days pass over me." Happily for his honor, the charm which held him captive was at length broken by no gentle or friendly hand. He had been weak enough to pay serious attention to a story about a ghost which haunted a house in Cock Lane, and had actually gone himself, with some of his friends at one in the morning, to St. John's Church, Clerkenwell, in the hope of receiving a communication from the perturbed spirit. But the spirit, though adjured with all solemnity, remained obstinately silent; and it soon appeared that a naughty girl of eleven had been amusing herself by making fools of so many philosophers. Churchill, who, confident in his powers, drunk with popularity and burning with party spirit, was looking for some man of established fame and large politics to insult, celebrated the Cock Lane Ghost in three cantos,

nicknamed Johnson "Pompose," asked where the book was which had been so long promised and so liberally paid for, and directly accused the great moralist of cheating. This terrible word proved effectual; and in October, 1765, appeared, after a delay of nine years, the new edition of Shakespeare.

37. This publication saved Johnson's character for honesty, but added nothing to the fame of his abilities and learning. The preface, though it contains some good passages, is not in his best manner. The most valuable notes are those in which he had an opportunity of showing how attentively he had during many years observed human life and human nature. The best specimen is the note on the character of Polonius. Nothing so good is to be found even in Wilhelm Meister's admirable examination of "Hamlet." But here praise must end. It would be difficult to name a more slovenly, a more worthless, edition of any great classic. The reader may turn over play after play without finding one happy conjectural emendation, or one ingenious and satisfactory explanation of a passage which had baffled preceding commentators. Johnson had, in his Prospectus, told the world that he was peculiarly fitted for the task which he had undertaken, because he had, as a lexicographer, been under the necessity of taking a wider view of the English language than any of his predecessors. That his knowledge of our literature was extensive, is indisputable. But, unfortunately, he had altogether neglected that very part of our literature with which it is especially desirable that an editor of

Shakespeare should be conversant. It is dangerous to assert a negative. Yet little will be risked by the assertion, that in the two folio volumes of the English Dictionary there is not a single passage quoted from any dramatist of the Elizabethan age, except Shakespeare and Ben. Even from Ben the quotations are few. Johnson might easily, in a few months, have made himself well acquainted with every old play that was extant. But it never seems to have occurred to him that this was a necessary preparation for the work which he had undertaken. He would doubtless have admitted that it would be the height of absurdity in a man who was not familiar with the works of Aeschylus and Euripides to publish an edition of Sophocles. Yet he ventured to publish an edition of Shakespeare, without having ever in his life, as far as can be discovered, read a single scene of Massinger, Ford, Decker, Webster, Marlowe, Beaumont, or Fletcher. His detractors were noisy and scurrilous. Those who most loved and honored him had little to say in praise of the manner in which he had discharged the duty of a commentator. He had, however, acquitted himself of a debt which had long lain heavy on his conscience, and he sank back into the repose from which the sting of satire had roused him. He long continued to live upon the fame which he had already won. He was honored by the University of Oxford with a Doctor's degree, by the Royal Academy with a professorship, and by the King with an interview, in which his Majesty most graciously expressed a hope that so excellent a writer would not

cease to write. In the interval, however, between 1765 and 1775, Johnson published only two or three political tracts, the longest of which he could have produced in forty-eight hours, if he had worked as he worked on the "Life of Savage" and on "Rasselas."

38. But though his pen was now idle his tongue was active. The influence exercised by his conversation, directly upon those with whom he lived, and indirectly on the whole literary world, was altogether without a parallel. His colloquial talents were, indeed, of the highest order. He had strong sense, quick discernment, wit, humor, immense knowledge of literature and of life, and an infinite store of curious anecdotes. As respected style, he spoke far better than he wrote. Every sentence which dropped from his lips was as correct in structure as the most nicely balanced period of the *Rambler*. But in his talk there were no pompous triads, and little more than a fair proportion of words in *osity* and *ation*. All was simplicity, ease, and vigor. He uttered his short, weighty, and pointed sentences with a power of voice, and a justness and energy of emphasis, of which the effect was rather increased than diminished by the rollings of his huge form, and by the asthmatic gaspings and puffings in which the peals of his eloquence generally ended. Nor did the laziness which made him unwilling to sit down to his desk prevent him from giving instruction or entertainment orally. To discuss questions of taste, of learning, of casuistry, in language so exact and so forcible that it might have been printed without the alteration of a

word, was to him no exertion, but a pleasure. He loved, as he said, to fold his legs and have his talk out. He was ready to bestow the overflowings of his full mind on anybody who would start a subject ; on a fellow-passenger in a stage coach, or on the person who sat at the same table with him in an eating-house. But his conversation was nowhere so brilliant and striking as when he was surrounded by a few friends whose abilities and knowledge enabled them, as he once expressed it, to send him back every ball that he threw. Some of these, in 1764, formed themselves into a club, which gradually became a formidable power in the commonwealth of letters. The verdicts pronounced by this conclave on new books were speedily known over all London, and were sufficient to sell off a whole edition in a day, or to condemn the sheets to the service of the trunk maker and the pastry cook. Nor shall we think this strange when we consider what great and various talents and acquirements met in the little fraternity. Goldsmith was the representative of poetry and light literature, Reynolds of the arts, Burke of political eloquence and political philosophy. There, too, were Gibbon, the greatest historian, and Jones, the greatest linguist, of the age. Garrick brought to the meetings his inexhaustible pleasantry, his incomparable mimicry, and his consummate knowledge of stage effect. Among the most constant attendants were two high-born and high-bred gentlemen, closely bound together by friendship, but of widely different characters and habits, — Bennet Langton, distinguished by his skill

THE LITERARY CLUB AT SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS'

Boswell Reynolds Garrick di Paoli T. Warton
Dr. Johnson Burke Dr. Burney Goldsmith

in Greek literature, by the orthodoxy of his opinions, and by the sanctity of his life ; and Topham Beauclerk, renowned for his amours, his knowledge of the gay world, his fastidious taste, and his sarcastic wit. To predominate over such a society was not easy. Yet even over such a society Johnson predominated. Burke might, indeed, have disputed the supremacy to which others were under the necessity of submitting. But Burke, though not generally a very patient listener, was content to take the second part when Johnson was present ; and the club itself, consisting of so many eminent men, is to this day popularly designated as Johnson's Club.

39. Among the members of this celebrated body was one to whom it has owed the greater part of its celebrity, yet who was regarded with little respect by his brethren, and had not without difficulty obtained a seat among them. This was James Boswell, a young Scotch lawyer, heir to an honorable name and a fair estate. That he was a coxcomb and a bore, weak, vain, pushing, curious, garrulous, was obvious to all who were acquainted with him. That he could not reason, that he had no wit, no humor, no eloquence, is apparent from his writings. And yet his writings are read beyond the Mississippi, and under the Southern Cross, and are likely to be read as long as the English exists, either as a living or as a dead language. Nature had made him a slave and an idolater. His mind resembled those creepers which the botanists call parasites, and which can subsist only by clinging round the stems and im-

bibing the juices of stronger plants. He must have fastened himself on somebody. He might have fastened himself on Wilkes, and have become the fiercest patriot in the Bill of Rights Society. He might have fastened himself on Whitefield, and have become the loudest field preacher among the Calvinistic Methodists. In a happy hour he fastened himself on Johnson. The pair might seem ill matched. For Johnson had early been prejudiced against Boswell's country. To a man of Johnson's strong understanding and irritable temper, the silly egotism and adulation of Boswell must have been as teasing as the constant buzz of a fly. Johnson hated to be questioned ; and Boswell was eternally catechizing him on all kinds of subjects, and sometimes propounded such questions as, " What would you do, sir, if you were locked up in a tower with a baby ? " Johnson was a water-drinker, and Boswell was a wine-bibber, and indeed little better than an habitual sot. It was impossible that there should be perfect harmony between two such companions. Indeed, the great man was sometimes provoked into fits of passion, in which he said things which the small man, during a few hours, seriously resented. Every quarrel, however, was soon made up. During twenty years the disciple continued to worship the master ; the master continued to scold the disciple, to sneer at him, and to love him. The two friends ordinarily resided at a great distance from each other. Boswell practised in the Parliament House of Edinburgh, and could pay only occasional visits to London. During those visits his chief business was

to watch Johnson, to discover all Johnson's habits, to turn the conversation to subjects about which Johnson was likely to say something remarkable, and to fill quarto note-books with minutes of what Johnson had said. In this way were gathered the materials, out of which was afterwards constructed the most interesting biographical work in the world.

40. Soon after the club began to exist, Johnson formed a connection less important indeed to his fame, but much more important to his happiness, than his connection with Boswell. Henry Thrale, one of the most opulent brewers in the kingdom, a man of sound and cultivated understanding, rigid principles, and liberal spirit, was married to one of those clever, kind-hearted, engaging, vain, pert young women, who are perpetually doing or saying what is not exactly right, but who, do or say what they may, are always agreeable. In 1765 the Thrales became acquainted with Johnson, and the acquaintance ripened fast into friendship. They were astonished and delighted by the brilliancy of his conversation. They were flattered by finding that a man so widely celebrated preferred their house to any other in London. Even the peculiarities which seemed to unfit him for civilized society, — his gesticulations, his rollings, his puffings, his mutterings, the strange way in which he put on his clothes, the ravenous eagerness with which he devoured his dinner, his fits of melancholy, his fits of anger, his frequent rudeness, his occasional ferocity, — increased the interest which his new associates took in him. For these things were

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the cruel marks left behind by a life which had been one long conflict with disease and adversity. In a vulgar hack writer, such oddities would have excited only disgust. But in a man of genius, learning, and virtue, their effect was to add pity to admiration and esteem. Johnson soon had an apartment at the brewery in Southwark, and a still more pleasant apartment at the villa of his friends on Streatham Common. A large part of every year he passed in those abodes — abodes which must have seemed magnificent and luxurious indeed, when compared with the dens in which he had generally been lodged. But his chief pleasures were derived from what the astronomer of his Abyssinian tale called "the endearing elegance of female friendship." Mrs. Thrale rallied him, soothed him, coaxed him ; and, if she sometimes provoked him by her flippancy, made ample amends by listening to his reproofs with angelic sweetness of temper. When he was diseased in body and in mind, she was the most tender of nurses. No comfort that wealth could purchase, no contrivance that womanly ingenuity, set to work by womanly compassion, could devise, was wanting to his sick-room. He requited her kindness by an affection pure as the affection of a father, yet delicately tinged with a gallantry which, though awkward, must have been more flattering than the attentions of a crowd of the fools who gloried in the names, now obsolete, of Buck and Maccaroni. It should seem that a full half of Johnson's life, during about sixteen years, was passed under the roof of the Thrales. He accompanied the

family sometimes to Bath, and sometimes to Brighton, once to Wales, and once to Paris. But he had at the same time a house in one of the narrow and gloomy courts on the north of Fleet Street. In the garrets was his library, a large and miscellaneous collection of books, falling to pieces and begrimed with dust. On a lower floor he sometimes, but very rarely, regaled a friend with a plain dinner, — a veal pie, or a leg of lamb and spinach, and a rice pudding. Nor was the dwelling uninhabited during his long absences. It was the home of the most extraordinary assemblage of inmates that ever was brought together. At the head of the establishment Johnson had placed an old lady named Williams, whose chief recommendations were her blindness and her poverty. But, in spite of her murmurs and reproaches, he gave an asylum to another lady who was as poor as herself, Mrs. Desmoulins, whose family he had known many years before in Staffordshire. Room was found for the daughter of Mrs. Desmoulins, and for another destitute damsel, who was generally addressed as Miss Carmichael, but whom her generous host called Polly. An old quack doctor named Levett, who bled and dosed coal-heavers and hackney coachmen, and received for fees crusts of bread, bits of bacon, glasses of gin, and sometimes a little copper, completed this strange menagerie. All these poor creatures were at constant war with each other, and with Johnson's negro servant Frank. Sometimes, indeed, they transferred their hostilities from the servant to the master, complained that a better table

was not kept for them, and railed or maundered till their benefactor was glad to make his escape to Streatham, or to the Mitre Tavern. And yet he, who was generally the haughtiest and most irritable of mankind, who was but too prompt to resent anything which looked like a slight on the part of a purse-proud bookseller, or of a noble and powerful patron, bore patiently from mendicants, who, but for his bounty, must have gone to the workhouse, insults more provoking than those for which he had knocked down Osborne and bidden defiance to Chesterfield. Year after year Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Desmoulins, Polly and Levett, continued to torment him and to live upon him.

41. The course of life which has been described was interrupted in Johnson's sixty fourth year by an important event. He had early read an account of the Hebrides, and had been much interested by learning that there was so near him a land peopled by a race which was still as rude and simple as in the Middle Ages. A wish to become intimately acquainted with a state of society so utterly unlike all that he had ever seen frequently crossed his mind. But it is not probable that his curiosity would have overcome his habitual sluggishness, and his love of the smoke, the mud, and the cries of London, had not Boswell importuned him to attempt the adventure, and offered to be his squire. At length, in August, 1773, Johnson crossed the Highland line, and plunged courageously into what was then considered, by most Englishmen, as a dreary and perilous wilderness. After wandering about two

Mrs. Thrale

months through the Celtic region, sometimes in rude boats which did not protect him from the rain, and sometimes on small shaggy ponies which could hardly bear his weight, he returned to his old haunts with a mind full of new images and new theories. During the following year he employed himself in recording his adventures. About the beginning of 1775 his "Journey to the Hebrides" was published, and was, during some weeks, the chief subject of conversation in all circles in which any attention was paid to literature. The book is still read with pleasure. The narrative is entertaining; the speculations, whether sound or unsound, are always ingenious; and the style, though too stiff and pompous, is somewhat easier and more graceful than that of his early writings. His prejudice against the Scotch had at length become little more than matter of jest; and whatever remained of the old feeling had been effectually removed by the kind and respectful hospitality with which he had been received in every part of Scotland. It was, of course, not to be expected that an Oxonian Tory should praise the Presbyterian polity and ritual, or that an eye accustomed to the hedge-rows and parks of England should not be struck by the bareness of Berwickshire and East Lothian. But even in censure Johnson's tone is not unfriendly. The most enlightened Scotchmen, with Lord Mansfield at their head, were well pleased. But some foolish and ignorant Scotchmen were moved to anger by a little unpalatable truth, which was mingled with much eulogy, and assailed him whom they chose to consider

as the enemy of their country with libels much more dishonorable to their country than anything that he had ever said or written. They published paragraphs in the newspapers, articles in the magazines, sixpenny pamphlets, five-shilling books. One scribbler abused Johnson for being blear-eyed ; another, for being a pensioner ; a third informed the world that one of the Doctor's uncles had been convicted of felony in Scotland, and had found that there was in that country one tree capable of supporting the weight of an Englishman. Macpherson, whose " Fingal " had been proved in the " Journey " to be an impudent forgery, threatened to take vengeance with a cane. The only effect of this threat was that Johnson reiterated the charge of forgery in the most contemptuous terms, and walked about, during some time, with a cudgel, which, if the impostor had not been too wise to encounter it, would assuredly have descended upon him, to borrow the sublime language of his own epic poem, " like a hammer on the red son of the furnace."

42. Of other assailants Johnson took no notice whatever. He had early resolved never to be drawn into controversy ; and he adhered to his resolution with a steadfastness which is the more extraordinary, because he was, both intellectually and morally, of the stuff of which controversialists are made. In conversation, he was a singularly eager, acute, and pertinacious disputant. When at a loss for good reasons, he had recourse to sophistry ; and when heated by altercation, he made unsparing use of sarcasm and in-

vective. But when he took his pen in his hand, his whole character seemed to be changed. A hundred bad writers misrepresented him and reviled him ; but not one of the hundred could boast of having been thought by him worthy of a refutation, or even of a retort. The Kenricks, Campbells, MacNicols, and Hendersons did their best to annoy him, in the hope that he would give them importance by answering them. But the reader will in vain search his works for any allusion to Kenrick or Campbell, to MacNicol or Henderson. One Scotchman, bent on vindicating the fame of Scotch learning, defied him to the combat in a detestable Latin hexameter :

"Maxime, si tu vis, cupio contendere tecum."

43. But Johnson took no notice of the challenge. He had learned, both from his own observation and from literary history, in which he was deeply read, that the place of books in the public estimation is fixed, not by what is written about them, but by what is written in them ; and that an author whose works are likely to live is very unwise if he stoops to wrangle with detractors whose works are certain to die. He always maintained that fame was a shuttlecock which could be kept up only by being beaten back, as well as beaten forward, and which would soon fall if there were only one battledore. No saying was oftener in his mouth than that fine apophthegm of Bentley, that no man was ever written down but by himself.

44. Unhappily, a few months after the appearance

of the "Journey to the Hebrides" Johnson did what none of his envious assailants could have done, and to a certain extent succeeded in writing himself down. The disputes between England and her American colonies had reached a point at which no amicable adjustment was possible. Civil war was evidently impending; and the ministers seem to have thought that the eloquence of Johnson might with advantage be employed to inflame the nation against the opposition here, and against the rebels beyond the Atlantic. He had already written two or three tracts in defence of the foreign and domestic policy of the government; and those tracts, though hardly worthy of him, were much superior to the crowd of pamphlets which lay on the counters of Almon and Stockdale. But his "Taxation No Tyranny" was a pitiable failure. The very title was a silly phrase, which can have been recommended to his choice by nothing but a jingling alliteration which he ought to have despised. The arguments were such as boys use in debating societies. The pleasantry was as awkward as the gambols of a hippopotamus. Even Boswell was forced to own that, in this unfortunate piece, he could detect no trace of his master's powers. The general opinion was that the strong faculties which had produced the Dictionary and the *Rambler* were beginning to feel the effect of time and of disease, and that the old man would best consult his credit by writing no more.

45. But this was a great mistake. Johnson had failed, not because his mind was less vigorous than

when he wrote "Rasselas" in the evenings of a week, but because he had foolishly chosen, or suffered others to choose for him, a subject such as he would at no time have been competent to treat. He was in no sense a statesman. He never willingly read or thought or talked about affairs of state. He loved biography, literary history, the history of manners; but political history was positively distasteful to him. The question at issue between the colonies and the mother country was a question about which he had really nothing to say. He failed, therefore, as the greatest men must fail when they attempt to do that for which they are unfit; as Burke would have failed if Burke had tried to write comedies like those of Sheridan; as Reynolds would have failed if Reynolds had tried to paint landscapes like those of Wilson. Happily, Johnson soon had an opportunity of proving most signally that his failure was not to be ascribed to intellectual decay.

46. On Easter Eve, 1777, some persons, deputed by a meeting which consisted of forty of the first booksellers in London, called upon him. Though he had some scruples about doing business at that season, he received his visitors with much civility. They came to inform him that a new edition of the English poets, from Cowley downwards, was in contemplation, and to ask him to furnish short biographical prefaces. He readily undertook the task, — a task for which he was pre-eminently qualified. His knowledge of the literary history of England since the Restoration was un-

rivalled. That knowledge he had derived partly from books, and partly from sources which had long been closed, — from old Grub Street traditions ; from the talk of forgotten poetasters and pamphleteers who had long been lying in parish vaults ; from the recollections of such men as Gilbert Walmesley, who had conversed with the wits of Button ; Cibber, who had mutilated the plays of two generations of dramatists ; Orrery, who had been admitted to the society of Swift ; and Savage, who had rendered services of no very honorable kind to Pope. The biographer therefore sat down to his task with a mind full of matter. He had at first intended to give only a paragraph to every minor poet, and only four or five pages to the greatest name. But the flood of anecdote and criticism overflowed the narrow channel. The work, which was originally meant to consist only of a few sheets, swelled into ten volumes, — small volumes, it is true, and not closely printed. The first four appeared in 1779, the remaining six in 1781.

47. The "Lives of the Poets" are, on the whole, the best of Johnson's works. The narratives are as entertaining as any novel. The remarks on life and on human nature are eminently shrewd and profound. The criticisms are often excellent, and, even when grossly and provokingly unjust, well deserve to be studied. For, however erroneous they may be, they are never silly. They are the judgments of a mind trammelled by prejudice and deficient in sensibility, but vigorous and acute. They therefore generally

contain a portion of valuable truth which deserves to be separated from the alloy ; and, at the very worst, they mean something, a praise to which much of what is called criticism in our time has no pretensions.

48. Savage's "Life" Johnson reprinted nearly as it had appeared in 1744. Whoever, after reading that life, will turn to the other lives, will be struck by the difference of style. Since Johnson had been at ease in his circumstances he had written little and talked much. When, therefore, he, after the lapse of years, resumed his pen, the mannerism which he had contracted while he was in the constant habit of elaborate composition, was less perceptible than formerly ; and his diction frequently had a colloquial ease which it had formerly wanted. The improvement may be discerned by a skilful critic in the "Journey to the Hebrides," and in the "Lives of the Poets" is so obvious that it cannot escape the notice of the most careless reader.

49. Among the lives the best are perhaps those of Cowley, Dryden, and Pope. The very worst is, beyond all doubt, that of Gray.

50. This great work at once became popular. There was, indeed, much just and much unjust censure ; but even those who were loudest in blame were attracted by the book in spite of themselves. Malone computed the gains of the publishers at five or six thousand pounds. But the writer was very poorly remunerated. Intending at first to write very short prefaces, he had stipulated for only two hundred

guineas. The booksellers, when they saw how far his performance had surpassed his promise, added only another hundred. Indeed, Johnson, though he did not despise, or affect to despise, money, and though his strong sense and long experience ought to have qualified him to protect his own interests, seems to have been singularly unskilful and unlucky in his literary bargains. He was generally reputed the first English writer of his time. Yet several writers of his time sold their copyrights for sums such as he never ventured to ask. To give a single instance, Robertson received four thousand five hundred pounds for the "History of Charles V"; and it is no disrespect to the memory of Robertson to say that the "History of Charles V" is both a less valuable and a less amusing book than the "Lives of the Poets."

51. Johnson was now in his seventy-second year. The infirmities of age were coming fast upon him. That inevitable event of which he never thought without horror was brought near to him; and his whole life was darkened by the shadow of death. He had often to pay the cruel price of longevity. Every year he lost what could never be replaced. The strange dependants to whom he had given shelter, and to whom, in spite of their faults, he was strongly attached by habit, dropped off one by one; and, in the silence of his home, he regretted even the noise of their scolding matches. The kind and generous Thrale was no more; and it would have been well if his wife had been laid beside him. But she survived to be the laughing-stock of those who

had envied her, and to draw from the eyes of the old man who had loved her beyond anything in the world, tears far more bitter than he would have shed over her grave. With some estimable and many agreeable qualities, she was not made to be independent. The control of a mind more steadfast than her own was necessary to her respectability. While she was restrained by her husband, a man of sense and firmness, indulgent to her taste in trifles, but always the undisputed master of his house, her worst offences had been impertinent jokes, white lies, and short fits of pettishness, ending in sunny good-humor. But he was gone; and she was left an opulent widow of forty, with strong sensibility, volatile fancy, and slender judgment. She soon fell in love with a music-master from Brescia, in whom nobody but herself could discover anything to admire. Her pride, and perhaps some better feelings, struggled hard against this degrading passion. But the struggle irritated her nerves, soured her temper, and at length endangered her health. Conscious that her choice was one which Johnson could not approve, she became desirous to escape from his inspection. Her manner towards him changed. She was sometimes cold and sometimes petulant. She did not conceal her joy when he left Streatham; she never pressed him to return; and, if he came unbidden, she received him in a manner which convinced him that he was no longer a welcome guest. He took the very intelligible hints which she gave. He read, for the last time, a chapter of the Greek Testament in the library which had been

formed by himself. In a solemn and tender prayer he commended the house and its inmates to the Divine protection, and, with emotions which choked his voice and convulsed his powerful frame, left forever that beloved home for the gloomy and desolate house behind Fleet Street, where the few and evil days which still remained to him were to run out. Here, in June, 1783, he had a paralytic stroke, from which, however, he recovered, and which does not appear to have at all impaired his intellectual faculties. But other maladies came thick upon him. His asthma tormented him day and night. Dropsical symptoms made their appearance. While sinking under a complication of diseases, he heard that the woman whose friendship had been the chief happiness of sixteen years of his life had married an Italian fiddler ; that all London was crying shame upon her ; and that the newspapers and magazines were filled with allusions to the Ephesian matron and the two pictures in "Hamlet." He vehemently said that he would try to forget her existence. He never uttered her name. Every memorial of her which met his eye he flung into the fire. She meanwhile fled from the laughter and hisses of her countrymen and countrywomen to a land where she was unknown, hastened across Mount Cenis, and learned, while passing a merry Christmas of concerts and lemonade parties at Milan, that the great man with whose name hers is inseparably associated had ceased to exist.

52. He had, in spite of much mental and much bodily affliction, clung vehemently to life. The feeling

described in that fine but gloomy paper which closes the series of his *Idlers*, seemed to grow stronger in him as his last hour drew near. He fancied that he should be able to draw his breath more easily in a southern climate, and would probably have set out for Rome and Naples but for his fear of the expense of the journey. That expense, indeed, he had the means of defraying; for he had laid up about two thousand pounds, the fruit of labors which had made the fortune of several publishers. But he was unwilling to break in upon this hoard, and he seems to have wished even to keep its existence a secret. Some of his friends hoped that the government might be induced to increase his pension to six hundred pounds a year; but this hope was disappointed, and he resolved to stand one English winter more. That winter was his last. His legs grew weaker; his breath grew shorter; the fatal water gathered fast, in spite of incisions which he, courageous against pain, but timid against death, urged his surgeons to make deeper and deeper. Though the tender care which had mitigated his sufferings during months of sickness at Streatham was withdrawn, he was not left desolate. The ablest physicians and surgeons attended him, and refused to accept fees from him. Burke parted from him with deep emotion. Windham sat much in the sick-room, arranged the pillows, and sent his own servant to watch at night by the bed. Frances Burney, whom the old man had cherished with fatherly kindness, stood weeping at the door; while Langton, whose piety eminently qualified him to be an adviser and

comforter at such a time, received the last pressure of his friend's hand within. When at length the moment, dreaded through so many years, came close, the dark cloud passed away from Johnson's mind. His temper became unusually patient and gentle ; he ceased to think with terror of death, and of that which lies beyond death ; and he spoke much of the mercy of God, and of the propitiation of Christ. In this serene frame of mind he died on the 13th of December, 1784. He was laid, a week later, in Westminster Abbey, among the eminent men of whom he had been the historian, — Cowley and Denham, Dryden and Congreve, Gay, Prior, and Addison.

53. Since his death, the popularity of his works — the "Lives of the Poets," and, perhaps, the "Vanity of Human Wishes," excepted — has greatly diminished. His Dictionary has been altered by editors till it can scarcely be called his. An allusion to his *Rambler* or his *Idler* is not readily apprehended in literary circles. The fame even of "Rasselas" has grown somewhat dim. But though the celebrity of the writings may have declined, the celebrity of the writer, strange to say, is as great as ever. Boswell's book has done for him more than the best of his own books could do. The memory of other authors is kept alive by their works. But the memory of Johnson keeps many of his works alive. The old philosopher is still among us in the brown coat with the metal buttons, and the shirt which ought to be at wash, blinking, puffing, rolling his head, drumming with his fingers, tearing his meat like a tiger,

and swallowing his tea in oceans. No human being who has been more than seventy years in the grave is so well known to us. And it is but just to say that our intimate acquaintance with what he would himself have called the anfractuosities of his intellect and of his temper, serves only to strengthen our conviction that he was both a great and a good man.

NOTES

Paragraph 1

Sovereigns in possession, Jacobite, royal touch. At the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603, the Stuart family of Scotland succeeded to the English throne in the person of James VI, who became James I of England. The Stuart line, James I, Charles I, Charles II, and James II, were unsuited by temper and principles to their English people. They adhered to the doctrine of the divine right of kings, recently made infamous by the German Kaiser; they believed in short that they were divinely appointed and were responsible solely to God and not at all to the people whom they ruled. A corollary of this belief was that they received from God the power of healing certain diseases by a mere laying on of hands (through a gold coin), hence, *the royal touch.* The disease most commonly treated in this fashion was scrofula, which came to be called the "King's evil." James II, the last of the Stuart line, succeeded his brother in 1685. He was so bigoted and arbitrary that in 1688 he was driven from England in the Revolution; William of Orange and James II's daughter, Mary, became king and queen respectively. Oaths of allegiance to the new line, *the sovereigns in possession*, were required of members of Parliament, the clergy, and all office holders. Adherents of the Stuart family after the Revolution were called *Jacobites* (from *Jacobus*, the Latin for *James*).

Attic. Practically equivalent to *Athenian.* Athens, the intellectual center of Greece, was situated in the district of Attica.

Augustan delicacy of taste. That refinement of taste in art and literature which characterized the reign of Emperor Augustus (31 B.C.-14 A.D.). The Augustan Age was the most illustrious in Roman literature; in it Virgil, Horace, Ovid, and Livy lived and wrote. The term *Augustan Age* is applied to period of like refinement in other literatures. Thus the reign of Queen Anne is often called the Augustan Age in English literature.

Great public schools of England; sixth form at Eton. The

English public schools are in no way like the public schools of the United States. They are public only in the sense that they are not conducted for private profit. Like our great preparatory schools, they are not supported by the state but by tuition fees and the income from endowments. They prepare chiefly for the great universities, and still devote themselves mostly to Greek and Latin. There are generally six classes, known as forms, the sixth form being the highest. Eton, Harrow, Rugby, and Westminster are among the most famous of these schools. A private school in England is one owned by individuals and generally run for a profit.

Restorers of learning ; Petrarch. In the fourteenth century there arose in Italy a great revival of interest in Greek and Roman literature and art called the Renaissance. Chief among the *restorers of learning* were Petrarch and Boccacio. *Petrarch* has been called the father of the revival of learning. He is now famous chiefly for his exquisite Italian sonnets ; his Latin works are now little read. In the fifteenth century, the movement was stimulated by the invention of printing, by the discovery of America, and by the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453, which drove the Grecian scholars to Europe. In the sixteenth century, the movement spread through France, England, and Germany.

Paragraphs 2 and 3

Either university ; Pembroke College, Oxford ; rulers of that society ; Christ Church ; gentleman commoner. The great English universities at Oxford and Cambridge are quite differently constituted from ours. Instead of our undergraduate colleges, and graduate and professional schools, they are composed only of allied colleges, each separately endowed and self-governed. *The rulers* of each college are the master and fellows. The fellows and the undergraduates known as scholars are supported by yearly payments from the college endowment. Students who pay their own expenses, including board at the commons (common eating-table), are called commoners. A *gentleman commoner* was a term applied in Johnson's day to the higher class of commoners, who by paying larger fees received special privileges. *Pembroke College, Oxford*, chiefly notable for Johnson's having attended it, was founded in 1624. The college possesses his teapot, and the desk on which he wrote his dictionary. The portrait of him by Reynolds, the celebrated English painter, hangs in the common room. *Christ Church* is one of the wealthiest of the Oxford colleges. It was founded by

Cardinal Wolsey in 1524, and numbers among its graduates King Edward VII, the Duke of Wellington, and Gladstone.

Macrobius. An obscure Roman grammarian of the fifth century A.D. Though only the classical scholar of to-day would know even the name of Macrobius, Johnson's becoming interested in his works is not surprising, for the *Saturnalia*, the most important of his books, contains "a great variety of curious historical, mythological, critical, and grammatical disquisitions."

Pope's "Messiah." In 1712, three years after Johnson's birth, Addison and Steele's *Spectator* published Pope's *Messiah*, a religious pastoral in imitation of Virgil's *Fourth Eclogue*. An eclogue is a short dialogue in verse between shepherds.

Virgilian. Resembling the style of Virgil, generally classed as the greatest Latin poet, the author of *The Aeneid*. He wrote during the Augustan Age, and was a great admirer of the Emperor Augustus. *Virgilian* connotes perfection of art and majesty of expression.

PARAGRAPH 6

Gilbert Walmesley. A jurist of no mean ability to whom Johnson was more indebted than this paragraph would indicate. Besides receiving Johnson constantly in his home and writing the letters mentioned in ¶ 9, Walmesley stocked Johnson's mind with much information, especially concerning literary men, that later was of much use (Cf. ¶ 46). Johnson said of him many years later: "Such was his amplitude of learning, and such his copiousness of communication, that it may be doubted whether a day now passes, in which I have not some advantage from his friendship."

Ecclesiastical court of the diocese. In England to the end of the seventeenth century, nearly to the birth of Johnson, there existed besides the regular king's courts a system of ecclesiastical courts, which had jurisdiction over "spiritual offences," including such matters as perjury, adultery, and divorce. In Johnson's time, however, their jurisdiction had been restricted practically to matters of church discipline.

Usher of a grammar school. The English *grammar school* is one in which college preparatory work is done. It got its name from the fact that for centuries Greek and Latin were the chief, if not the sole, studies. The great English public schools like Eton and Rugby are properly grammar schools, though the term is generally applied to the smaller endowed institutions. An *usher* was in Johnson's time a submaster or assistant teacher.

Latin book about Abyssinia. Johnson had read at Pembroke

a French translation of an account by a Portuguese Jesuit, Lobo, of a voyage to Abyssinia. Macaulay is therefore wrong in calling it a Latin book. Johnson's translation from the French into English is of interest because it is our first example of his prose style and because it probably suggested the setting of his *Rasselas*.

Politian. One of the most brilliant scholars and restorers of learning in Italy in the fifteenth century. His patron, Lorenzo de' Medici, the autocrat of Florence and the chief patron of learning in Italy, took Politian into his house, made him tutor of his children, and secured for him a position in the University at Florence.

Paragraph 7

This paragraph is a striking example of Macaulay's exaggeration and misstatement. Nearly every statement in the first half of it is open to question. Mrs. Porter's children were much younger than Johnson. His description of her is the one given by Garrick, who, according to Boswell, considerably aggravated the picture. Johnson was not unacquainted with women of real fashion. "In these families he [Johnson] passed much time in his early years. In most of them he was in the company of ladies, particularly at Mr. Walmsley's, whose wife and sisters-in-law, of the name of Acton, and daughters of a baronet, were remarkable for good breeding." (Boswell, under 1732, July 15.) Johnson did not call his wife Tetty but Tetty, which, like Betty, was a common abbreviation for Elizabeth. She was not so poor as he: she possessed a small fortune of about £800, with which he established the academy at Edial.

Queensberrys and Lepels. Macaulay always preferred the concrete term to the abstract one. Though Mary Lepel, who became Lady Hervey, and Catherine Hyde, afterwards Duchess of Queensberry, were doubtless familiar enough to Macaulay as prominent women of fashion in Johnson's time, they mean little to-day except to one who happens to have read the letters of Swift and Pope.

Paragraph 8

David Garrick (1717–1779). Leading English actor of Johnson's time. Among the best families of Lichfield was that of Captain Garrick, whose sons became two of Johnson's three pupils at Edial. One of them, David, accompanied Johnson to London to study law.

Paragraph 10

Besides Scott and Macaulay himself, Byron, Dickens and Thackeray might be mentioned as authors of the nineteenth century who made large sums from the sale of their books to the public.

Thomson, James (1700–1784). A Scottish poet and one of the pioneers of the new romantic school. His best-known poems, besides *The Seasons*, are *Rule Britannia* and *The Castle of Indolence*. *The Seasons* is, as its title indicates, a description of the sights and sounds of the changing year. Thomson was among the first to abandon the heroic couplet, and to go back to the Elizabethans instead of to Pope for models.

Fielding, Henry (1707–1754). The greatest English novelist of the eighteenth century. Richardson, the first novelist, produced in *Pamela* a heroine of such false sentimentality and moralizing virtue that Fielding determined to write a burlesque of it. He became so interested in his hero, Joseph Andrews, that he dropped the burlesque and wrote for the joy of writing. The book was so well received that he gave up the writing of plays and farces, and devoted to the novel what time he could spare from his duties as a magistrate in breaking up the gangs of ruffians and thieves that infested the streets of London by night. *Pasquin* is a popular burlesque criticizing the political corruption of the Walpole era. Fielding's style is coarse, even vulgar, but it is natural and vigorous. His best novel is *Tom Jones*.

"The Beggars' Opera." A burlesque satire written in 1728 by John Gay. Like *Pasquin*, it was a satire on English society and political institutions. In particular it was a caricature of Sir Robert Walpole. It was a lyrical drama, the characters of which were in large part thieves and highwaymen.

Paragraph 11

Drury Lane. A famous street in London — famous chiefly for being the site of the Drury Lane Theater, of which Garrick became manager in 1747; Johnson wrote a prologue for him.

Paragraph 12

Subterranean ordinaries and à la mode beef shops. An *ordinary* was a restaurant where meals were served at fixed — generally low — prices, like our *table d'hôte*; an *à la mode beef shop* was a restaurant specializing in beef "larded and stewed, or braised with spices, vegetables, etc."

Osborne ; Harleian Library. Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, and one of Queen Anne's prime ministers accumulated a vast private library. After his death the manuscripts were bought by the government and are in the British Museum. The books were sold to Osborne, the bookseller, who employed Johnson to write the introduction and the Latin items of his five-volume catalogue of the library.

Paragraph 13

Cave ; "Gentleman's Magazine." Edward Cave (1691–1754) was an English printer whose chief fame lies in his establishing of the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1731. It has had a long and prosperous career. The addition of Samuel Johnson to the staff was one of Cave's most fortunate acts. Johnson's first contribution was an ode in Latin to Cave himself. Among his latest was a biographical sketch of Cave after the latter's death. Cave also published Johnson's *Life of Savage* and *The Rambler*.

Senate of Lilliput ; Duke of Newcastle ; Lord Hardwicke ; William Pulteney. Robert Walpole was for twenty-one years (1721–1742) undisputed ruler of England. Enemies he had in plenty, for he was unscrupulous in method and jealous in temper. *William Pulteney*, afterwards Earl of Bath, was among Walpole's discarded friends. From that time until Walpole's fall in 1742, Pulteney remained one of his bitterest opponents. He was exceeded in violence of bitterness only by Swift, whose *Gulliver's Travels* was really a satire upon England. The description in *Gulliver's Travels* of the intrigues at the court of Blefuscu in the kingdom of *Lilliput*, in which the statesmen obtain favor by cutting capers on a tight rope before their sovereign, was nothing more nor less than an attack upon Walpole's policy. Upon Walpole's fall, Pulteney tried unsuccessfully to form a cabinet. A coalition ministry was then organized with the *Duke of Newcastle* as Secretary of State and *Lord Hardwicke* as Lord Chancellor.

Tory ; Whigs. See Introduction, § 28.

Capulets ; Montagues. Two noble families of Verona, Italy, in the fourteenth century. A deadly feud, the source of which lay in the " mere passion " of irrational pride, had long existed between the two families. In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet is a Capulet and Romeo a Montague. The death of the lovers brought an end to the feud.

Blues of the Roman Circus against the Greens. The drivers in the chariot races at Rome were distinguished by the color of their liveries. The whole population took sides, and the contest

of chariots within the circus was often followed by a contest of partisans outside it. This rivalry often resulted in bloodshed; thousands were slain in the great "Nika" riot.

Sacheverell. A famous Tory clergyman in the time of Queen Anne. In 1710 he preached two sermons in which he contended that the church was in danger from the Whigs. He attacked the Whig leader, Godolphin, and proclaimed the principle of the divine right of kings. Godolphin urged Sacheverell's impeachment by the House of Commons. He was found guilty, but popular sympathy rallied about him as a martyr. The Whigs were defeated in the next election.

Tom Tempest. An absurdly extreme Jacobite in Johnson's *Idler*, No. 10. "Tom Tempest is a steady friend to the house of Stuart. He can recount the prodigies that have appeared in the sky, and the calamities that have afflicted the nation every year from the Revolution; and is of the opinion that if the exiled family [the Stuarts] had continued to reign there would have neither been worms in our ships nor caterpillars in our trees."

Laud; Hampden; ship money; Falkland; Clarendon; Roundheads. Charles I, the second of the Stuart kings, continued his father's policy of personal rule, and insisted upon the doctrine of divine right. Chief among his advisers was *William Laud*, Archbishop of Canterbury. Bigoted and unscrupulous, Laud was; but Macaulay is certainly wrong in calling him "a poor creature," for he was most able. He stopped at nothing to crush the *Roundheads*, as the Puritans were called, because they wore their hair cropped close to distinguish themselves from the vain and worldly Cavaliers with their long curls. One of Charles's devices for raising money without resorting to Parliament was the levying of *ship money*. Theoretically this was a tax levied upon seaports in time of war for their defence. Charles levied it upon all the towns in the kingdom and in times of peace. *John Hampden*, a wealthy gentleman and member of Parliament, refused to pay his tax of twenty shillings to test the legality of the law. The Court of the Exchequer ruled against him by a vote of seven to five. Charles, however, failed to secure sufficient income by such means and was compelled to summon Parliament again. The first lasted three weeks and was dissolved. The second, immediately after being called, passed a bill depriving the king of his power of dissolving Parliament, and sat for over twenty years, thus getting the name of the Long Parliament. It then proceeded to release from prison all those put there by Charles; to punish Charles's ministers and advisers, the two chief ones, Strafford and Laud, being executed; and to limit

the powers of the king. The leaders of the moderates in the Long Parliament were *Viscount Falkland* and the *Earl of Clarendon.* Their sympathies were at first with the Puritans, but when the final break with Charles came, they joined him, and fought on his side against Cromwell. Clarendon lived to see the restoration and was for seven years prime minister under Charles II.

Dissenters and stockjobbers; the excise and the army; septennial parliaments, and continental connections. All terms connected with the hated Whigs. The *dissenters,* nonconformists, were Whigs because the Established Church clergy were a strong element in the Tory party; the *stock-jobbers* — commercial classes — were Whigs because the nobility and the wealthy gentry of the country were Tories; the *excise tax* was an internal revenue duty of Walpole, a Whig; *septennial parliaments* (parliaments lasting seven years instead of three as formerly) were secured by a Whig measure; *continental connections* were retained by George I, who was a German, the Elector of Hanover, and had Whig sympathies.

Aversion to the Scotch; Great Rebellion. Macaulay is wrong in his interpretation that Johnson hated the Scotch because in the *Great Rebellion* (the Puritan revolution) they had turned Charles I over to Cromwell and his associates. Boswell once said to Johnson, "Old Mr. Sheridan says, it ['your antipathy to the Scotch'] was because they sold Charles I." "Then, sir," Johnson replied, "old Mr. Sheridan has found out a very good reason." But Johnson did not wish to imply that such was the right reason. Boswell believed that Johnson hated the Scotch in reality "probably owing to his having had in his view the worst part of the Scottish nation, the needy adventurers, many of whom he thought were advanced above their merits by means which he did not approve." Johnson himself "candidly admitted that he could not tell the reason." His prejudice disappeared almost completely in later years.

Johnson's integrity is often questioned because of the deceit he practised upon the public in the reports of the parliamentary debates. As a matter of fact, he said later "that as soon as he found that the speeches were thought genuine, he determined that he would write no more of them; for 'he would not be accessory to the propagation of falsehood.'"

Paragraph 14

Pope; Horace; Johnson; Juvenal. All satirists, of varying degrees of bitterness. *Horace* was the leading lyric poet of the Augustan Age in Rome. His most famous works are the *Odes,*

Epodes, *Satires*, and *Epistles*. He had as a patron the wealthy Maecenas, and lived a life of ease. He ridiculed urbanely the foibles of fashionable Rome. *Alexander Pope* had in common with Horace the fact that he was in easy circumstances and was the friend of the great. He had also paraphrased very freely in his *Imitations of Horace* two of the *Satires* and four *Epistles*. Yet he lacked Horace's urbanity ; indeed in personality the two were quite unlike. Pope was deformed, dwarfish in body and soul, lacking in kind feeling, jealous, waspish. *Juvenal* lived about one hundred years after Horace and in the time of Rome's greatest moral degradation. His satires are not good-humored ridicule of foibles ; they are bitter, scornful railing at the despotism and lust and inhuman cruelties of Domitian and Nero, Claudius and Messalina ; at the loss of the old national manliness and self-respect among all the Romans. The common quality of Johnson and Juvenal was the bitterness of tone, the gloominess of view, with which each wrote. Juvenal did not suffer the poverty and physical privations of Johnson, yet he was practically exiled in his old age. Juvenal, too, had much more horrible things to write about than the sufferings of men of letters and the vanity of human wishes, the chief burdens of Johnson's satires. Though the parallel in each case is not perfect, there is enough similarity to give point to Pope's being called the "English Horace" and Johnson's being given the title of "the modern Juvenal."

Paragraph 15

Pope, with great kindness. Pope's treatment of Johnson was certainly unlike his usual attitude toward a literary rival. He was exceedingly vain, and most jealous of his prerogatives as the leading poet of the time. His *Dunciad* (Iliad of the Dunces) is a literary expression in a coarse and vengeful satire of his petty spite toward those who criticized him or showed a lack of appreciation of his genius. Perhaps Pope's kindness to Johnson was due to the fact that they had common literary principles. Dryden was the first great literary dictator of the classical school, Pope the second, and Johnson the last. Dryden established the heroic couplet (iambic pentameter lines riming in pairs) ; Pope perfected it ; Johnson defended it. More probably, however, Pope's kindness to Johnson was due to the latter's openly expressed admiration for him. Johnson paid him the compliment of translating his *Messiah* into Latin verse, and Pope replied by remarking that the translator made it "a question for posterity, whether his or mine be the original."

Bookseller's hack. One who for hire does mechanical literary work such as the compiling of indexes and the annotating of another's writings.

PARAGRAPH 16

Boyse ; Hoole ; Psalmanazar ; Savage. Johnson seems to have had the club habit. Though Macaulay does not mention the fact that these early friends of Johnson's were fellow members of a club, Johnson himself said, " He (John Hoole) was of a club in Old Street, with me and George Psalmanazar, and some others." It does not seem that this early conglomeration was any less remarkable in its way than the later one called *The Literary Club* or simply *The Club.* Concerning the impecunious Irish poet *Boyse,* the metaphysical tailor *Hoole,* and that son of an Earl, apprentice of a shoemaker, dissolute profligate, and mediocre poet *Richard Savage,* Macaulay is explicit enough. *George Psalmanazar,* however, is interesting enough to deserve somewhat further mention. His real name he never disclosed even in his memoirs. He was in reality of French birth, but he pretended to be a native of Formosa. After a most adventurous career of imposture in Germany and Flanders, he went to England and posed as a noble Japanese convert. He was employed by the Bishop of London to translate the Anglican catechism into Japanese, of which he had not the slightest knowledge. He published in 1704 a fictitious description of Formosa. When exposure was inevitable he made a full confession. Of the remainder of his life Johnson said, " George Psalmanazar's piety, penitence, and virtue exceeded almost what we read as wonderful even in the lives of saints." When Boswell asked Johnson if he had ever contradicted Psalmanazar, the reply was, " I should as soon have thought of contradicting a bishop."

Blue ribands in Saint James's Square. The highest aristocracy of London. St. James's Square has been since it was laid out a favorite residence of English aristocracy. The blue ribbon is the symbol of the highest order of knighthood in England, the Order of the Garter. According to legend, the order was originated by Edward III about 1350.

Newgate. A famous old prison in London several times rebuilt, razed in 1902, and now replaced by another.

Piazza of Covent Garden. *Covent* (Convent) *Garden* is a large square in London originally the garden of the convent at Westminster. It has long been noted for its vegetable, flower, and fruit market, and for the Covent Garden Theater. In Johnson's time the Garden was the scene of great football matches. The

piazza was an arcade or covered walk planned by the famous English architect Inigo Jones in imitation of Italian models. It was burned in part and remains only on the north and east sides of the square.

The Prime Minister. Sir Robert Walpole, of course. Cf. notes on ¶ 13 and Introduction, § 46.

Paragraph 17

Grub Street. Now Milton Street; according to Johnson's *Dictionary*, "the name of a street in London, much inhabited by writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary writers: whence any mean production is called Grub-street."

Paragraph 18

Warburton. Bishop of Gloucester, a kind of clerical Johnson but arrogant and supercilious. He had his Boswell in Bishop Hurd, but Warburton and Hurd are to-day insignificant beside Johnson and Boswell.

Paragraph 19

Earl of Chesterfield. "Undisputed sovereign of wit and fashion" in Johnson's time. Besides his fame as orator and statesman, he is noted for his *Letters to his Son*, concerning which Johnson said, "Take out the immorality, and it should be put in the hands of every young man." But its immorality is much exaggerated.

Paragraph 20

Tenth Satire of Juvenal; Wolsey; Sejanus. The theme of Juvenal's tenth satire was itself the vanity of human wishes. It is illustrated by great historic instances, such as Sejanus and Hannibal. *Sejanus* was the favorite and minister of the Emperor Tiberius. He made himself virtually ruler of Rome, and aimed even higher. He had Tiberius's son, Drusus, poisoned. He set about removing the remaining members of the imperial family, but Tiberius finally became suspicious. Sejanus formed a plot to assassinate his master, but he was betrayed, degraded from his command, seized, and executed, A. D. 31. Johnson used Cardinal Wolsey as a parallel instance of the certain punishment of greed and arrogant ambition. *Wolsey* desired to become pope, and plotted to this end in every conceivable way. He enraged the English nobility and lost the confidence of the king, Henry VIII. Finally, in 1530, he was charged with treason and was summoned to London. Before he could be tried, he died.

Juvenal's "Hannibal"; Johnson's "Charles." *Hannibal* was a second historic instance used by Juvenal to show the "vanity of human wishes." Hannibal's military genius was transcendent. He was destined by his father to be the instrument of Carthaginian vengeance against Rome. In 219 B.C. he marched through Gaul and across the Alps into Italy. For seventeen years he defeated army after army led by the best generals of Rome — this in the face of only half-hearted support from Carthage. Several times he was on the point of beseiging Rome, but fortune was against him. After being recalled, he was defeated in 202 at Zama near Carthage by Scipio. He then devoted himself to deeds of statesmanship, and so succeeded in strengthening Carthage that Rome demanded his surrender. Showing true "Punic faith" (perfidy), his fellow countrymen deserted their great genius and he went into exile. In 183 he poisoned himself rather than let himself fall into the hands of Rome. Johnson's *Charles* was a parallel modern instance of a great military genius thwarted through no fault of his own. Charles XII of Sweden was one of the most brilliant generals of modern times. He repeatedly defeated the forces of the famous Russian Tsar, Peter the Great, and was marching on Moscow when hi relatively small army was surrounded and nearly annihilated at Pultowa — in the year of Johnson's birth. Charles took refuge with his allies the Turks, but was treacherously treated by them. He escaped to Sweden and resumed his brilliant warfare. In 1718 he was killed by a random bullet in the siege of a Norwegian fortress.

Demosthenes. The greatest orator of Greece, and it is generally admitted without equal in the world. Biographers delight in telling how painstakingly he trained himself to speak in spite of natural impediments: how, with pebbles in his mouth, he declaimed against the waves, how he practised speaking while running up hill, how he shaved one side of his head to remove the temptation to seek the haunts of men, how he wrote out Thucydides eight times to master his style. Among his most famous speeches were the *Philippics* directed against Philip of Macedon. In 322 B.C., as a result of his lifelong attempts to preserve Athens from Macedonian domination, he was condemned to death as a traitor. He fled and sought asylum in a temple of Poseidon. Finding that his asylum was to be violated, he took poison in sight of his enemies.

Cicero. The greatest Roman orator and probably second only to Demosthenes in the world. He is most famous for his speeches against Catiline, who conspired to make himself tyrant of Rome.

Cicero was throughout his life a brilliant though inconsistent supporter of republicanism. He even ventured to attack Julius Caesar and Antony. He was proscribed by the Second Triumvirate, and slain in 43 A.D.

Paragraph 22

Blank verse. Iambic pentameter unrimed. Johnson, being of the classical school and a follower of Pope, was naturally more at home with the heroic couplet — iambic pentameter with lines rimed in pairs.

Paragraph 23

"Tatler"; "Spectator"; Addison. Joseph Addison (1672–1719) was one of the leading figures in the Augustan Age of English literature. His work was twofold : he turned on vice the very mockery it had used against virtue in the days of the Restoration — he purified English literature and life ; secondly, prompted by the more original genius of Steele, he perfected the familiar essay in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*. Richard Steele, an irresponsible but good-hearted, lovable Irishman, originated *The Tatler* in 1709, six months before Johnson's birth, and invited Addison to write some of the essays. He also invented the character of Sir Roger de Coverley for *The Spectator*, begun in 1711 ; but Addison became particularly interested in the character and wrote most of the essays about him. The influence of these two periodicals was most remarkable. There followed a veritable swarm of imitations, of which Johnson's *Rambler* and *Idler* are the most notable. Addison's style was so distinctive for its ease and elegance that the adjective *Addisonian* is used to-day to characterize a singularly graceful style. Johnson himself said, "Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison."

Paragraph 24

Richardson, Samuel (1689–1761). The first English novelist. As a boy he had a natural talent for writing letters, and he was often employed by the girls of the village to write their love letters for them. He thus gained an insight into feminine nature that later was of much use to him. His reputation as a letter writer grew, and he was finally approached by a group of publishers with a proposal to write a series of letters to be used as models. Richardson gladly accepted the proposal and had the happy idea of so connecting the letters to tell the story of a girl's

life. The result was the first real English novel, *Pamela*. Johnson was a great admirer of Richardson's and very much preferred him to Fielding, Richardson's successor and superior.

Young, Edward (1681–1761). A minor English poet, the author of *Night Thoughts*. He was much admired — by far too much — by Johnson and Boswell.

Hartley, David (1705-1757). An English physician and philosopher. He was one of the first psychologists.

Bubb Dodington. George Bubb Dodington (1691–1762), eminent for his skill in "practical politics." His morals were not above reproach and his political principles were low, but he was a good scholar and a generous patron of literature.

Prince Frederick. Frederick Louis, Prince of Wales, son of George II. He never became king as he died in 1715, nine years before his father. The relations between George II and his son were very unfriendly, the fault not being all on one side. The prince's character was not attractive ; the king refused him a fair allowance. Frederick gathered about him all the malcontents and made his court the center of opposition to Walpole. George III was his eldest son.

Paragraph 25

Sir Roger, etc. Characters or incidents in *The Spectator*.

Squire Bluster and Mrs. Busy, etc. Characters or incidents in *The Rambler*. It is not quite fair to judge the respective merits of Addison and Johnson by a comparison of the interest in the characters and incidents of the periodicals. The best parts of *The Rambler* are the serious essays, which won for Johnson the title "The Great Moralist."

Paragraph 26

The Gunnings. Two sisters, Maria and Elizabeth, of humble Irish birth but of great beauty. Maria became Countess of Coventry ; Elizabeth, Duchess of Hamilton and later Duchess of Argyle. When Duchess of Argyle she was a hostess of Johnson during his tour in Scotland.

Lady Mary. Lady Mary Wortley Montague (1689–1762), a celebrated letter writer and wit. She had a most romantic life, eloping because her father refused to consent to her marriage, and later carrying on sentimental correspondence with Pope and others. She was the first to introduce inoculation for small pox, a practice with which she became familiar at Constantinople while her husband was ambassador there.

Pit of Drury Lane Theater. In England originally that part of the theater around the stage in which the "groundlings" — artisans, mechanics, apprentices, and the like — stood. Admission to this part of the theater was very cheap, and the judgments from it were therefore those of the people. The name "pit" is now used in England for the cheap seats on the floor behind the stalls. The Drury Lane Theater was among the most famous in London. Garrick became manager of it in 1747.

"Monthly Review." A critical periodical having a continuous existence of about 100 years (1749–1845). It was strongly Whig and nonconformist and therefore quite disapproved of by Johnson. There is an interesting account in Boswell's report of Johnson's interview with the King (George III). "The King then asked him if there were any other literary journals published in this kingdom, except the *Monthly* and *Critical Reviews*, and on being answered that there was no other, his Majesty asked which of them was the best; Johnson answered that the *Monthly Review* was done with most care, the *Critical* upon the best principles; adding, that the authors of the *Monthly Review* were enemies of the church."

Paragraph 27

In a letter. This famous letter to Chesterfield has been called the Declaration of Independence or Magna Charta of authorship. After Chesterfield's two papers in *The World* appeared, Johnson said to Garrick, "I have sailed a long and painful voyage round the world of the English language; and does he now send out two cock-boats to tow me into harbor?" Boswell gives us a copy of the celebrated letter.

To the Right Honourable the Earl of Chesterfield

February 7, 1755.

My Lord: — I have been lately informed, by the proprietor of *The World*, that two papers, in which my Dictionary is recommended to the public, were written by your Lordship. To be so distinguished, is an honour which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address, and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*; — that I might obtain that regard for which I saw

the world contending ; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could ; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

Seven years, my Lord, have now past, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door ; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it, at last, to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a Patron before.

The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

Is not a Patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help ? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind ; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it ; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it ; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity, not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the Public should consider me as owing that to a Patron which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less ; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation,

My Lord,
Your Lordship's most humble,
Most obedient servant,
SAM. JOHNSON

Horne Tooke. John Horne Tooke (1736–1812), a combative and energetic English curate, politician, and philologist. He was the son of John Horne, a poulterer, whom he ingenuously described in school as a Turkey merchant. He adopted the name Tooke in 1782, in honor of his friend William Tooke, who had promised to make him his heir. Horne Tooke early abandoned the ministry for the exciting career of supporting unpopular and

radical persons and causes. He was for some years a supporter of the notorious John Wilkes. He secured for the public the right of printing the debates in Parliament (1771). He was committed to prison for his support of the American cause in the Revolution. Nearly twenty years later he was accused of treason for aiding the French revolutionaries, but was quickly acquitted. His conversational powers rivaled those of Dr. Johnson, but he was not so fortunate as to have a Boswell.

Paragraph 28

Junius and Skinner. Franz Junius (1589–1677), was a Huguenot scholar born of a French father and a German mother. He was born and educated in Germany, but at the age of thirty he emigrated to England, where he spent most of his remaining years. He devoted himself to the study of Anglo-Saxon and the related Old Teutonic languages. His best-known work is the *Etymologicum Anglicanum*, an etymological dictionary of the English language. *Stephen Skinner* (1623–1707) was a graduate of Christ Church, Oxford. He published an etymological dictionary of the English language in 1671. Johnson said of their dictionaries in the preface of his own, "Junius appears to have excelled in extent of learning, and Skinner in rectitude of understanding."

Paragraph 29

Spunging-houses. "A house to which debtors are taken before commitment to prison, where the bailiffs sponge upon them, or riot at their cost," according to Johnson's own definition.

Jenyns' "Inquiry." Soame Jenyns (1709–1787) was an English author owing his literary reputation during his lifetime as much to his wealth and social position as to his ability. Johnson condemned his *Inquiry* as a "slight and shallow attempt to solve one of the most difficult of moral problems."

Paragraph 32

Miss Lydia Languish. A character in Sheridan's famous comedy, *The Rivals*, noted for her insipid sentimentality. Her chief interest in life lay in the reading of sickly sentimental novels, the characters of which she used as a model for her own conversation and actions.

Paragraph 33

Rasselas and Imlac; Nekayah and Pekuah. The two chief male and the two chief female characters respectively of *Rasselas*.

Rasselas was Prince of Abyssinia; Imlac was an old sage, the teacher of the prince and princess; Nekayah was the princess, the sister of Rasselas; Pekuah was the attendant of the princess.

Newton. Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727), eminent English natural philosopher and mathematician. His researches and discoveries in physics and astronomy were most original. He is popularly connected with the story of the apple tree and the law of gravitation. Dr. Johnson had a great admiration for Newton and remarked at one time "that if Newton had flourished in ancient Greece, he would have been worshipped as a divinity."

"Bruce's Travels." James Bruce (1730–1794), a Scotch explorer. He was the first of the three greatest African explorers, anticipating the second, Livingstone, by seventy years and the third, Stanley, by one hundred. In his famous journey (1770–1772) through Abyssinia, Bruce determined the course of the Blue Nile. Johnson said that "when he first conversed with Mr. Bruce, the Abyssinian traveller, he was very much inclined to believe he had been there; but that he had afterwards altered his opinion."

Mrs. Lennox. Charlotte Lennox (1720–1804), a minor English novelist and poet. She is the author of a novel still widely known by name but not much read, *The Female Quixote*. She was of American birth, being the daughter of Colonel James Ramsey, at one time lieutenant-governor of New York. Johnson had a very great admiration for her, and crowned her with laurel at an all-night supper planned by him in honor of her first novel.

Mrs. Sheridan. Mrs. Frances Sheridan (1724–1766), the mother of the famous dramatist and herself a novelist and dramatist of some ability. She wrote a two-volume novel when she was only fifteen. Her best-known play, *The Discovery*, was one of Garrick's favorites, and he revived it at the Drury Lane as a counter attraction to her son's *The Rivals*, when the latter was put on at the Covent Garden Theater. Johnson said to her concerning her best novel, *Memoirs of Miss Sydney Biddulph*, "I know not, madam, that you have a right, upon moral principles, to make your readers suffer so much."

Hector quote Aristotle. *Troilus and Cressida*, Act II, Scene 2, lines 163–166 —

> "*Hector.* — Paris and Troilus, you have both said well,
>
> . . . . . .
>
> . . . but superficially; not much
> Unlike young men, whom Aristotle thought
> Unfit to hear moral philosophy."

Hector. Son of King Priam of Troy. He was the leading warrior on his side at the siege of Troy. When Achilles, the champion of the Greeks, retired from the siege in anger at Agamemnon, the Greek general, Hector drove the Greeks back to their ship and killed Patroclus, Achilles's friend. Then Achilles, to revenge his friend, returned to the conflict, slew Hector, dragged his body behind his chariot around Troy to his tent, and round the tomb of Patroclus. The siege of Troy is supposed to have taken place in the twelfth century B.C.

Aristotle. Great Greek philosopher, 384–322 B.C. His writings upon logic, physics, biology, ethics, politics, poetics, rhetoric, and metaphysics have been the chief source of modern culture. He lived roughly eight centuruies after Hector. Such a lack of consistency in time is called an anachronism.

Julio Romano . . . the oracle of Delphi. Guilio Romano (1492–1546) was a prolific Italian painter, modeler, architect, and engineer. He was the ablest of Raphael's pupils and completed some of the Master's undertakings in the Vatican. The temple of the oracle of Apollo at Delphi, the most revered of ancient Grecian oracles, was closed near the end of the fourth century B.C. by Emperor Theodosius. The anachronism referred to is to be found in *A Winter's Tale.* The action of the play is supposed to have taken place in the time of Guilio, who died 1200 years after the oracle was closed; yet the judgment of the oracle at Delphi is sought. (Act II, Scene 1, line 182ff.)

Paragraph 34

Lord Privy Seal. A member of the British cabinet having in his custody the Privy Seal; this seal must be affixed to nearly all state papers in the United Kingdom except those of major importance, which bear the Great Seal. Lord Gower is the minister referred to: Johnson said to Boswell, "You know, Sir, Lord Gower forsook the old Jacobite interest. When I came to the word *renegado,* after telling that it meant 'one who deserts to the enemy, a revolter,' I added, 'Sometimes we say a Gower.' Thus it went to the press; but the printer had more wit than I and struck it out."

George the Third; the city; Oxford; Cavendishes and Bentincks; Somersets and Windhams; Lord Bute. George I and George II had been more German princes than British kings. They were quite content to allow Walpole and his successor to do the actual governing. *George III,* the grandson of George II and son of the ill-fated Frederick Louis (cf. ¶ 24, note), had altogether different ideas. He was young (only twenty-two),

thoroughly English, and determined to rule as well as to reign. He was resolved that he would not be controlled by the autocratic Whig families, as his predecessors had been, and that he would break down the system of cabinet and party government. Such a policy was thoroughly Tory, for the Whigs had always represented the principle of Parliamentary supremacy. The *city of London* being largely industrial and commercial, was strongly Whig (cf. Introduction) and "was becoming mutinous." The university at *Oxford*, which had been a hotbed of Tory sentiment since 1688, "was becoming loyal." All the Whigs, even those of great families like the *Cavendishes* and *Bentincks*, which had helped to place his family on the throne, George III began forcing out of office. Such inveterate Tory families as the *Somersets* and *Wyndhams* hastened to his support. The great Whig prime minister, William Pitt, the elder, was forced to resign and a Scotchman, *Lord Bute*, the king's friend and adviser and former tutor, was appointed in his place. Bute was as unpopular as Pitt was popular, and not without reason. As administrator and statesman he was hopelessly weak and unqualified. He was able to withstand the general animosity of all England for only a year. Yet Bute was not without personal merits. He had strong feelings of loyalty and affection for George III, and he was greatly esteemed in the circle of his family and among intimate friends. He was exceptionally well read, had refined tastes in art and literature, and was a botanist of considerable ability.

Paragraph 36

Cock Lane Ghost. A famous imposture which excited London in 1762. The eleven-year-old daughter of a man named Parsons, who lived on Cock Lane, told of hearing scratchings and rappings upon the walls of her bedroom. A luminous figure, the ghost of a certain woman who had died in the house two years previously, was reported. Upon investigation the whole story was found to be a fraud practised by the Parsons family to throw suspicion for purposes of blackmail on Kent, the husband of the supposedly murdered woman. Parsons was arrested and condemned to the pillory. Dr. Johnson was one of the investigators of the mystery, and assisted in detecting the cheat. Boswell contends that Johnson was never deceived, but Johnson got very angry when Boswell pressed him for details, possibly because he felt he had little to be proud of in the affair.

Churchill. Charles Churchill (1731–1764), a minor English poet and a rancorous satirist of dissolute character. He seems to have been a most loyal friend, but a most bitter enemy. No

invective was too personal or too shocking for his use. His most notable work was *The Rosciad*, a keen satire upon the actresses and actors of his day, Garrick alone among the latter escaping ridicule. The poem mentioned in the text was entitled *The Ghost*. Johnson is caricatured in Book II, line 653–688, beginning

> " Pomposo, insolent and loud,
> Vain idol of a scribbling crowd,
> Whose very name inspires an awe,
> Whose ev'ry word is Sense and Law."

The accusation of cheating is to be found in Book III, line 801ff.

> " He for subscribers baits his hook,
> And takes their cash : but where's the book ?
> No matter where ; wise fear, we know,
> Forbids the robbing of a foe ;
> But what, to serve our private ends,
> Forbids the cheating of our friends ? "

Paragraph 37

Polonius. A character in *Hamlet*, the Court Chamberlain, the father of Laertes and Ophelia, and the mouthpiece for the famous precepts beginning,

> " Give thy thoughts no tongue,
> Nor any unproportion'd thought his act."

Johnson wrote in part, " Polonius is a man bred in courts, exercised in business, stored with observations, confident of his knowledge, proud of his eloquence, and declining to dotage."

Wilhelm Meister. The hero of Goethe's famous novel, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. Macaulay was a very great admirer of the criticism of the character of Hamlet there expressed. In part, Meister is made to say, " To me it is clear that Shakespeare meant, in the present case, to represent the effects of a great action laid upon a soul unfit for the performance of it. There is an oak-tree planted in a costly jar, which should have borne only pleasant flowers in its bosom : the roots expand, the jar is shivered."

Ben. Ben Jonson (1574–1637), the greatest of Shakespeare's successors (though only ten years younger, Jonson survived Shakespeare twenty-one years), as Marlowe was the greatest of his predecessors among the Elizabethan dramatists. Jonson was as noted for his learning as Shakespeare for his natural genius.

He was a classicist, and fought for the old classical rules, the unities of time, place, and action. The triumph of his and of the French influence culminated in the classical movement of the eighteenth century, of which Dryden, Pope, and Johnson were the chief exponents. Jonson's best works were his comedies, *Volpone or the Fox*, *The Alchemist*, *The Silent Woman*, and his masques in honor of James I and Queen Anne such as *The Masque of Beauty* and *The Masque of Queens*. Jonson died twenty-one years after Shakespeare, and his death was mourned as a national calamity — unlike Shakespeare's. He was buried in Westminster Abbey. On the marble slab over his grave were engraved the words always associated with him : "O rare Ben Jonson."

Aeschylus ; Euripides ; Sophocles. The three great tragedians of ancient Greece. Aeschylus, born about 525 B.C., was the oldest and Euripides, born about 480 B.C. the youngest. Sophocles was fifteen years older than Euripides. The three were rivals in the famous Age of Pericles, which is to Greek history and literature what the Age of Elizabeth is to English. A full understanding of Sophocles could not be complete without a knowledge of Aeschylus and Euripides.

Massinger, Ford, Decker, Webster, Marlowe, Beaumont or Fletcher. All dramatists and, with the exception of Marlowe, Shakespeare's successors. Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593) was born in the same year as Shakespeare ; yet he died before Shakespeare had really begun his career as dramatist. Had he lived to full maturity, one cannot say what he might not have accomplished. He was the son of a poor shoemaker, and his short life was full of violence and excesses. In his twenty-ninth year he was stabbed in a drunken brawl and died as wretchedly as he had lived. He is noted for four tragedies, all of a type which has been named after him Marlowesque : each revolves about a single dominant personality who is a man consumed by lust of power. These tragedies were *Tamburlaine*, *Faustus*, *The Jew of Malta*, and *Edward II*. Concerning the other dramatists, who all followed Shakespeare, nothing in particular need be said, except that they indicate the very rapid decline of the drama ; none of them is comparable with Shakespeare's really great successor, Ben Jonson. The stage so rapidly became immoral that only the vote of Parliament to close the theaters saved the drama from dissolution by corruption.

Royal Academy. The Royal Academy of Arts in London was founded in 1768 "for the purpose of cultivating and improving the arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture." George III gave the Academy his support and nominated the thirty-six original members. For a number of years he paid the deficit

of the Academy in the conduct of its exhibitions and schools. Sir Joshua Reynolds was the first president, and Benjamin West, an American, was the second — holding the office for twenty-eight years. Johnson was appointed Professor in Ancient Literature the year after the Academy was founded ; the title carried with it no salary.

Paragraph 38

Goldsmith. Oliver Goldsmith (1728–1774), "the representative of poetry and light literature" in *The Club*, was "the most versatile, the most charming, the most inconsistent, and the most lovable genius of all the literary men who made famous the age of Johnson." According to Johnson's Latin epitaph of him in Westminster Abbey, he touched nothing he did not adorn (Nihil quod tetigit non ornavit); according to Boswell, however, "His mind resembled a fertile but thin soil. . . . The oak of the forest did not grow there : but the elegant shrubbery and the fragrant parterre appeared in gay succession." In poetry he wrote such charming descriptive poems as *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village ;* in drama he produced such immortal comedies as *The Goodnatured Man* and *She Stoops to Conquer ;* in fiction he wrote the inimitable *Vicar of Wakefield*, the Dr. Primrose of which is supposed to have been modeled after his own father, a poor Irish curate of noble character. But the art of conversation Goldsmith did not adorn. Garrick described him as one

> ". . . for shortness called Noll,
> Who wrote like an angel and talked like poor Poll."

Johnson himself said, "No man was more foolish when he had not a pen in his hand, or more wise when he had."

Reynolds. Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), the most celebrated English portrait painter, was also a most urbane and polished gentleman. He it was who suggested the formation of *The Club*. Gibbon called Johnson "Reynolds' oracle." Reynolds painted Johnson's portrait many times, as well as the portraits of the other members of *The Club*. Boswell dedicated his *Life of Johnson* to Reynolds in most flattering terms : "Your equal and placid temper, your variety of conversation, your true politeness, . . . and that enlarged hospitality which has long made your house a common center of union for the great, the accomplished, the learned, and the ingenious ; all these qualities I can, in perfect confidence of not being accused of flattery, ascribe to you." Reynolds was the first president of the

Royal Academy, and delivered his able critical addresses, *Discourses on Painting*, before it. He also wrote for Johnson three numbers of *The Idler*.

Burke. Edmund Burke (1729–1797), the most celebrated English orator (he was of Irish birth), was equally great as philosophical politician and writer of prose. Unlike many of his contemporaries he was incorruptible in politics and pure in private life. His best-known orations are *Conciliation with America*, *American Taxation*, and *Impeachment of Warren Hastings*; his best prose work is his *Reflections on the French Revolution*. As an orator his style was too refined, his speeches too carefully constructed and too full of details to be as effective as they deserved to be. As Goldsmith said, he was "... too deep for his hearers, still went on refining, and thought of convincing while they thought of dining." Johnson always admired Burke and said of him, "You could not stand five minutes with that man beneath a shed while it rained, but you must be convinced that you had been standing with the greatest man you had ever yet seen." Burke, on the other hand, was a consistent admirer of Johnson, and was well content in conversation "to have rung the bell to him."

Gibbon. Edward Gibbon (1737–1794), the first great English historian and one of the greatest England has produced, is notable chiefly for his great work, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, in six volumes. The work is marred for many by the author's skeptical attitude toward Christianity; yet he is "the one historian of the eighteenth century whom modern research has neither set aside nor threatened to set aside." His scholarship, his reading, his search for facts were fully as great as Macaulay's. His style, the very climax of classicism, is so majestic and sonorous, so elaborate and ornate, that it often obscures one's interest in the narrative. There is an oft-quoted comparison of Gibbon and Johnson by a contemporary, George Colman, "Johnson's style was grand, and Gibbon's elegant; the stateliness of the former was sometimes pedantic, and the polish of the latter was occasionally finical. Johnson marched to kettle-drums and trumpets; Gibbon moved to flutes and hautboys: Johnson hewed passages through the Alps, while Gibbon levelled walks through parks and gardens."

Jones. Sir William Jones (1746–1794), "the greatest linguist of the age," was a distinguished English Oriental scholar, the first to recognize the value of Sanskrit. He knew thirteen European and Oriental languages well, and had a moderate acquaintance with twenty-eight others. For a more profitable occupation financially, he turned to law and speedily distinguished

himself. He became the leading authority on Hindu and Mohammedan law. Withal he was noted for his modesty: Mrs. Thrale says that Johnson "pronounced one day at my house a most lofty panegyric upon Jones, the Orientalist, who seemed little pleased with the praise."

Garrick. David Garrick (1716–1779), the foremost actor of his age, came to London a graceful, dapper, merry youth, with the avowed purpose of studying law. He inherited a small fortune and set up in business as a wine merchant, but speedily failed. He then turned to his true field, the theater. Of his success there little need be added to Macaulay's words in ¶ 22 of the *Life of Johnson*. Under his managership (1747–1776), the Drury Lane was for a generation the leading London theater. Perhaps note should be made of his services to the stage and of the source of success. His services to the stage were twofold: he considerably purified the stage of grossness; he revived interest in Shakespeare by a masterly production of his plays even if often in much altered form — he himself played in not less than seventeen Shakespearean parts. The secret of his success seems to have been the naturalness of his acting: for stately and sonorous declamation he substituted "rapid changes of passion and humor in both voice and gesture, which held his audiences spellbound." Goldsmith's lines about him are famous:

> "Our Garrick's a salad; for in him we see
> Oil, vinegar, sugar, and saltness agree!
> As an actor, confess'd without rival to shine;
> As a wit, if not first, in the very first line.
> On the stage he was natural, simple, affecting:
> 'Twas only when he was off, he was acting."

Sir Joshua Reynolds once remarked "That Dr. Johnson considered Garrick as his property, and would never suffer anyone to praise or abuse him but himself" — of both of which privileges he often made use. His allusion to Garrick's death in the *Lives of the Poets* (see the one on Edmund Smith) was later inscribed upon the Garrick memorial in Lichfield: "I am disappointed by that stroke of death which has eclipsed the gaiety of nations, and impoverished the public stock of harmless pleasure."

Bennet Langton (1737-1801). The representative in *The Club* of classical, especially Greek, literature, is now famous chiefly as a friend of Johnson's. Of him Johnson said, "The earth does not bear a worthier man. . . . I do not know who will go to Heaven if he does not." Yet, with all his virtue, his best friend was the irresponsible Beauclerk.

Topham Beauclerk (1737-1780). The representative in *The Club* of gay society, owes, like Langton, his fame chiefly to his friendship with Johnson. The better side of his character is evidenced by the warmth of feeling both Langton and Johnson had for him. Upon his death Johnson said of him most exactly: "Poor dear Beauclerk . . . his wit and his folly, his acuteness and maliciousness, his merriment and reasoning, are now over."

PARAGRAPH 39

Wilkes: the Bill of Rights Society. John Wilkes (1727–1797) was a political agitator who, though utterly unprincipled and of loose morals generally, yet succeeded in so arousing the indignation of the people that the government was forced to concede the freedom of the press (including the publication of debates in Parliament) and freedom of election. He established a notorious Whig paper, the *North Briton*, which attacked Lord Bute most boldly and bitterly. He was expelled from the House of Commons for printing an obscene poem, and for the "false, scandalous, and seditious libel" of the government in No. 45 of the *North Briton*. While under sentence he was elected to Parliament for Middlesex. He was promptly expelled by Commons and as promptly re-elected. His election was declared void. Again he was elected and again he was rejected. When he was elected a fourth time, his opponent, who had received only one fourth as many votes, was seated. Immediately a storm of protest broke out with the battle cry "Wilkes and Liberty." The government was defeated in several elections and Wilkes was allowed to sit. A few years later he became Lord Mayor of London and even George III was compelled to admit that he had never met so well bred a lord mayor — though his conversation was frequently obscene and profane, he knew how to suit it to his company. Staunch Tory and ardent moralist as Johnson was, he confessed that "Jack has great variety of talk, Jack is a scholar, and Jack has the manners of a gentleman." The *Bill of Rights Society* was doubtless one of the many political societies or clubs agitating for Parliamentary reform.

Whitefield: Calvinistic Methodists. George Whitefield (1714–1770) was, like Wilkes, an agitator — he was to religion what Wilkes was to politics. He and the two Wesleys were the leaders of the little group of Oxford students called Methodists because of their methodical regularity in attending the weekly sacrament. Whitefield was the most effective preacher of the three. He was theatrical and extravagant but intense and earnest. It was said that when he preached to twenty thousand colliers, grimy from

the coalpits, one could see the tears " making white channels down their blackened cheeks." The enthusiasm, the strong spiritual excitement he aroused among the lower classes was tremendous. Women fainted ; strong men burst into sobs. Whitefield broke with Wesley over the doctrine of Calvinism. Wesley was opposed to the Calvinistic tenet of predestination or election — that God selected those for salvation — and taught that each man could be saved by victory over sin. The *Calvinistic Methodists* preached the depravity of human nature and salvation only by the election (selection) of the Almighty. Dr. Johnson, though Whitefield entered Pembroke only twelve months after Johnson left it, had no very high opinion of him : " Whitefield . . . did not draw attention by doing better than others, but by doing what was strange. Were Astley [a celebrated bareback-rider] to preach a sermon standing upon his head upon a horse's back, he would collect a multitude to hear him ; but no wise man would say he had made a better sermon for that."

Paragraph 40

Southwark. A borough of London on the south side of the Thames largely occupied by commercial houses. After Mr. Thrale's death, Johnson sold the brewery for Mrs. Thrale for £135,000. This brewery is still the largest commercial establishment in Southwark.

Streatham. A suburb south of London in Johnson's time. It is now a large residential district within London. Thrale's house, Streatham Park, is no longer standing, but there is in the parish church of St. Leonard a memorial of him with an inscription by Johnson.

Buck and Maccaroni. John Wilson Croker, fearing that the words might become obsolete — and Macaulay states they have — kindly defines the words for us in his edition of Boswell : " It may be useful to future readers to know that the word *macaroni* . . . and the word *buck* . . . are nearly synonomous with the term *dandy*, employed now-a-days to express a young gentleman who in his dress and manners affects the extreme of fashion." Croker's fears were groundless ; Macaulay's statement is unfounded. " Any schoolboy knows " — in Macaulay's favorite phrase — what *buck* means, and *macaroni* is preserved for us in this meaning in *Yankee Doodle.* It is said " the popularity of the dish in Italy led a set of coxcombs who had travelled there to institute the Macaroni Club : and its members, with their ridiculous dress, soon spread the contagion."

Bath . . . Brighton. Both famous watering places. Bath

has been noted since ancient times for its mineral springs. It is west of London about one hundred miles. It was the most fashionable resort of London in Johnson's time. Brighton is a seashore resort on the English Channel. It is only fifty-one miles from London; its ready accessibility accounts in part for its popularity.

Fleet Street. A street in the heart of London running parallel to the Thames. It got its name from the Fleet River, which was converted into a sewer in 1765. Johnson's garret is still a most popular literary pilgrimage.

Mitre Tavern. In a court off Fleet Street. Johnson loved inns in general and the Mitre Tavern, which was not far from his home, in particular: "There is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn." Boswell's meetings with Johnson frequently took place in the Mitre Tavern.

Paragraph 41

Hebrides. A large group of islands off the west coast of Scotland, also called the Western Isles. They are very barren and little cultivated.

Lord Mansfield. William Murray (1705–1793), an eminent English jurist and orator, Chief justice of the Court of the King's Bench (the highest court of Common Law in England) from 1756 to 1788. He was a Tory but a moderate one. Macaulay calls him "the father of modern Toryism." He had the almost unique experience of remaining in the British cabinet through various changes in administration.

Macpherson, "Fingal." In 1761, a Scotch schoolmaster named James Macpherson published what he said was a translation from Ossian, a Gaelic bard of the third century, under the title of *Fingal, an Ancient Epic Poem.* The work aroused great interest and was widely accepted as authentic. Johnson made investigations for himself on his journey through the islands upon which Macpherson contended the poems had been found, and he reached the conclusion that Macpherson had found only fragments, which he had woven into a romance of his own making. Macpherson was challenged to produce the originals, and though he made constant promises, he never fulfilled them. Strangely enough, Macpherson was buried in Westminster Abbey only a few feet from Johnson.

Paragraphs 42, 43

Maxime, etc. "I very much desire, if you are willing, to debate with you."

Apophthegm of Bentley. Richard Bentley (1662–1742), one of the greatest classical scholars England has produced, the forerunner of modern critical philology. According to Boswell, Johnson "thought very highly of Bentley; that no man now went so far in the kinds of learning that he cultivated; that the many attacks on him were owing to envy, and to a desire of being known, by being in competition with such a man. . . . And he was right not to answer; for in his hazardous method of writing, he could not but be often enough wrong." The hazardous method of writing has reference to his editions of Horace, Terence, and Milton, in which he made thousands of conjectural emendations. Bentley's many enemies were due in large part to his strenuous efforts to reform Trinity College, the "most splendid foundation in the university of Cambridge." The college had fallen from its high estate because of the indolence and luxurious habits of its fellows. Bentley diverted the income of the fellows to the uses of the college. The fellows for forty years strove mightily to oust him and several times barely fell short of succeeding. Bentley remained undisturbed through these attacks, though his scholarship seems to have lost much of its originality after his appointment to the mastership. It is apparent enough why he should say from the bottom of his heart, "Depend upon it, no man was ever written down but by himself."

Paragraph 44

Almon and Stockdale. Well-known booksellers of Johnson's time. Stockdale was for a long time Almon's porter; when Almon retired, Stockdale set up a bookshop in opposition to his successor.

Taxation no Tyranny. One of the few productions of Johnson that Boswell could not admire — though Boswell always differed, deferentially indeed, with his idol over two topics, the Scotch and America. Boswell said of this pamphlet: "I could not perceive in it that ability of argument or that felicity of expression, for which he was, upon other occasions, so eminent. Positive assertion, sarcastical severity, and extravagant ridicule, which he himself reprobated as a test of truth, were united in this rhapsody."

Paragraph 45

Sheridan. Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751–1816), most gifted as a writer of comedies and scarcely less brilliant as Parliamentary orator. He was proposed for membership in *The Club* by Johnson himself — probably in 1777, when Sheridan was

only twenty-six — with the recommendation that "He who has written the two best comedies of the age is surely a considerable man." Sheridan's comedies, *The Rivals* and *The School for Scandal*, vie with Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* for recognition as the best acting comedy in English. His greatest orations were those in the impeachment of Warren Hastings.

Wilson. Richard Wilson (1714–1782), great English landscape painter. It is interesting to note that the converse of Macaulay's propositions does not hold: Sheridan could and did deliver orations as great as Burke's; Wilson was a portrait painter of no mean ability, and though he could not have equaled Reynolds, his early portraits were most creditable productions. He painted full-length portraits of the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York.

Paragraph 46

Cowley. Abraham Cowley (1618–1667), the most popular poet of his age, the age of Milton. While he was alive, his fame was much greater than that of Milton; soon, however, posterity reversed this judgment. Cowley's precocity was as great as that of Johnson and Macaulay. He wrote his first long poem when he was ten, and was famous before his sixteenth birthday.

Gilbert Walmesley. See ¶ 6 and note.

Wits of Button. The coffee-house was in the generation preceding Johnson the favorite meeting place of "all the world." The number of coffee-houses in London about the time of Johnson's birth has been estimated at three thousand! Each house had its own habitues, who were usually men of similar tastes and interests. From the word pictures of Addison and Steele in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, one can understand how the whole life of London centered in these delightful resorts. Button, an old servant of Addison's, kept (near Covent Garden) a house that was the favorite meeting place of Addison, Steele, Swift, and Pope. "Here it was," Johnson wrote, "that the wits of that time used to assemble."

Cibber. Colley Cibber (1671–1757), an excellent comic actor, an indifferent dramatist, and a mediocre poet, unjustly made by Pope the central figure of the *Dunciad* [Epic of Dunces]. Cibber acted for years in the Drury Lane Theater, and became manager of it. He produced many of his own plays and adapted Shakespeare to what he thought were the exigencies of the stage. Cibber was poet laureate from 1730 to 1757. Johnson, like Pope — and Fielding, too — had little use for Cibber, of whom he said, "I wondered that he had so little to say in conversation, for he had kept the best company and learnt all that can be got

by the ear. He abused Pindar to me, and then showed me an ode of his own, with an absurd couplet, making a linnet soar on an eagle's wing."

Orrery. John Boyle, Earl of Cook and Orrery (1707–1762), author of *Remarks on the Life and Writings of Jonathan Swift.* Boswell says that Johnson "told us he was well acquainted with Swift's Lord Orrery. He said he was a feeble-minded man." But Johnson went on to explain the nature of this feeble-mindness —Orrery was afraid to read certain criticisms of one of his books.

Swift. Jonathan Swift (1667–1745), the leading English prose satirist. His best-known work, *Gulliver's Travels*, was a bitter satire upon human society. The first of Gulliver's four voyages is to Lilliput, where the inhabitants are about as tall as a man's thumb, and act and have motives on the same dwarfish scale. The parties, the Littleendians and the Bigendians, are divided upon the question of whether an egg should be broken upon its big or its little end — a satire, of course, upon the politics of England at the time. Johnson got the names he used in the *Parliamentary Debates* from this masterpiece of Swift's. He also included Swift's life among the *Lives of the Poets*, though his poetry is not great either in quality or quantity. Yet he was strongly prejudiced against Swift and constantly belittled his genius. "Swift has a higher reputation than he deserves," he once said. Again, "If Swift was really the author of the *Tale of a Tub*, as the best of his other performances were a very inferior merit, he should have hanged himself after he had written it."

Savage . . . services . . . to Pope. Johnson accuses Savage "of supplying Pope with private intelligence and secret incidents, so that the ignominy of an informer was added to the terror of a satirist." Pope doubtless used these details in the *Dunciad.*

Paragraph 49

Cowley. See notes on ¶ 46.

Dryden. John Dryden (1631–1700), greatest English poet between Milton and Pope. His life was marred by the readiness with which he shifted his allegiance, political and religious: he was by birth a Puritan and wrote an excellent poem in praise of Cromwell; with the Restoration he placed himself on the winning side, writing several poems in honor of Charles II; when James II, with Catholic predilections, came to the throne, Dryden turned Catholic. His literary productions, like Pope's and Johnson's, were most varied. He wrote bitter political satires in verse like *Absalom and Achitophel*, innumerable hack-work comedies in rimed couplets, various critical essays in prose, translations of

Virgil and Juvenal, and a large number of odes and miscellaneous poems like *Alexander's Feast.* Like Ben Jonson before him and Pope and Dr. Johnson after him, Dryden was the literary dictator of his age. He held court in Wills's coffee-house. He spent his evenings here in a chair by the fire in winter, by the window in summer. He was a subject for sympathetic treatment by Johnson because he was the forerunner of the classical age. He established heroic verse as the standard for satiric, didactic, and descriptive poetry. Johnson declared that Dryden "found English poetry brick and he left it marble."

Pope. See notes on ¶ 14 and ¶ 15.

Gray. Thomas Gray (1716–1771), a forerunner with Burns of the revolt against classicism and of the romantic revival of the early nineteenth century. He was the author of "the best-known poem in the English language," the *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard.* It is hardly probable, therefore, that Johnson, the staunch defender of classicism, could write sympathetically or justly of this revolutionary. Boswell makes Johnson say of Gray, "Sir, he was dull in company, dull in his closet, dull everywhere. He was dull in a new way and that made people think him great. He was a mechanical poet." Boswell showed more perspicuity in saying, "I understand he was reserved, and might appear dull in company; but surely he was not dull in poetry."

Paragraph 50

Malone. Edmond Malone (1741–1812), a famous Irish critic and Shakespearean scholar. Johnson had a great regard for Malone as critic, and Malone, who succeeded him in editing Shakespeare, did honor to Johnson's memory in a preface.

Robertson. William Robertson (1721–1793), an eminent Scotch historian who closely imitated Johnson's style. As Johnson said, "Sir, if Robertson's style be faulty, he owes it to me; that is, having too many words, and those too big ones." Concerning Robertson, Johnson repeated the famous advice to young writers that so impressed Macaulay: "I would say to Robertson what an old tutor of a college said to one of his pupils: 'Read over you compositions, and wherever you meet with a passage which you think is particularly fine, strike it out.'"

Paragraph 51

Music-master from Brescia. Gabriel Piozzi, a talented Italian musician. Macaulay, influenced no doubt by sympathy for Johnson, by Boswell's jealousy of Mrs. Thrale, and most of all by the Victorian prejudice against "mixed marriages," is grossly

unfair both to Mrs. Thrale and to Piozzi. Hester Lynch's marriage to Henry Thrale was only one of convenience : he was considerably older, and their tastes were quite different. Her affection for Piozzi was warm and permanent, but was no more a "degrading passion" than any other love match. She lived happily with him until his death in 1809.

Solemn and tender prayer. Both Macaulay and Boswell misrepresent the circumstances under which this prayer was delivered. He was leaving "that beloved home" because Mrs. Thrale was giving up the house. Six months later Johnson is found by Boswell at Mrs. Thrale's new residence in Argylle Street, London.

Ephesian matron. An allusion to a story in *Petronius* and summarized by Jeremy Taylor in *Holy Dying*, Ch. V. A widow of Ephesus, an ancient city in Asia Minor, was so overcome by grief that she followed the body of her husband to the grave "resolved to weep to death." But she found stationed nearby a soldier who offered her wine and sympathy. She was so solaced by his comfortings that she fell in love with him and married him the same day. A similar anecdote is told by Mr. A. E. Newton concerning an ancestor of Mrs. Thrale's.[1]

Two pictures in Hamlet. Act III, Sc. 4, lines 53 ff.

> HAMLET. Look here, upon this picture, and on this,
> The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.
> See, what a grace was seated on this brow ;
> Hyperion's curls ; the front of Jove himself,
> An eye like Mars, to threaten and command ;
> A station like the herald Mercury
> New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill ;
> A combination and a form indeed,
> Where every god did seem to set his seal,
> To give the world assurance of a man.
> This was your husband. Look you now what follows :
> Here is your husband ; like a mildew'd ear,
> Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes ?

PARAGRAPH 52

Windham. William Windham (1750–1810), a distinguished Whig politician and orator, a close friend of both Burke and Johnson. In August, 1784 (he died the following December), Johnson wrote a touching letter to Windham beginning "The tenderness with which you have been pleased to treat me through

[1] *Amenities of Book Collecting*, page 188 f.

my long illness, neither health nor sickness can, I hope, make me forget."

Frances Burney. Fanny Burney (1752–1840), afterwards Madame D'Arblay. Her first — and best — novel was *Evelina*, which Dr. Johnson thought worthy of Richardson. Sir Joshua Reynolds and Burke both professed to have sat up all night reading it. Miss Burney was much cultivated by Mrs. Thrale as was Johnson. It was at the Thrales' that Johnson grew to know her so well and to become so fond of her — his "little Burney," as he called her. Her later novels, except possibly *Cecilia*, are not comparable with her first. In 1793 she married General Alexandre D'Arblay, an exiled French artillery officer. Her *Diary and Letters*, to which she owes her continued fame, was bitterly attacked by Croker and as eloquently defended by Macaulay in *The Edinburgh Review*.

Westminster Abbey. The Abbey of St. Peter, the most widely celebrated church in the British empire. It is said to have been begun by Edward the Confessor in 1050. Its peculiar fame lies not so much in its age or the beauty of its architecture, but in the fact that it has long been the place of coronation of the English sovereigns and the burial place of most of them and of many of their greatest subjects. A part of the south transept (cross passage) is famous under the name of "Poets' Corner": in it are buried most of England's great writers.

Cowley and Denham, Dryden and Congreve, Gay, Prior, and Addison. British authors, all to a certain extent poets, whom Johnson wrote of in the *Lives of the Poets*. For Cowley, see note on ¶ 46; Dryden, ¶ 49; Addison, ¶ 23. Sir John Denham (1615–1668) was a minor Cavalier poet. William Congreve (1670–1729) produced between 1690 and 1700 a number of excellent comedies only slightly tainted by the immorality of the stage in his day. John Gay (1685–1732) is famous chiefly for his *Beggars' Opera*, a burlesque which made "Rich gay and Gay rich," Rich being the name of the producer. Matthew Prior (1664–1721) was a minor poet and diplomatist during the time of William and Mary, and Queen Anne. Johnson thought him wanting "not wisdom as a statesman or elegance as a poet."

Paragraph 53

Anfractuosities. Defined by Johnson as "fulness of windings and turnings." Boswell reports Johnson as having used the word in reference to Mr. Langton's mother and father, who had refused to sit for their pictures: "Sir, among the anfractuosities of the human mind, I know not if it may not be one, that there is a superstitious reluctance to sit for a picture."

APPENDIX A

DESCRIPTIVE LIST OF JOHNSON'S CHIEF WORKS

(See Boswell's *Life* for a complete *Chronological Catalogue of the Prose Works.*)

1. *Translation of Pope's* MESSIAH into *Latin Verse* (1728). This was the first of Johnson's works to be printed. It was written as a Christmas exercise less than two months after he entered college. Pope said that the translator left it "a question for posterity, whether his or mine be the original."

2. *Translation of Lobo's* VOYAGE TO ABYSSINIA (1733). Printed in Birmingham and published in London, anonymously. It was a translation from the French of a Monsieur Le Grand, and not from Latin, as Macaulay says. The book is of interest first, because it doubtless suggested to Johnson the scene of *Rasselas ;* secondly, because the preface shows Johnson's style : "The Reader will here find no Regions cursed with irremediable Barrenness, or bless'd with Spontaneous Fecundity."

3. *London* (1738). A short poem (236 *ll.*) in heroic verse. It is an imitation of Juvenal's *Third Satire.* Though it was published anonymously, Pope rightly declared that its author would not long be concealed. The story of the poem is as follows : the poet's imaginary friend, one Thales, disgusted with London life, departs for Wales. Upon leaving, he contrasts the pleasures of country life with the discomfort and corruption of city life. His political views are expressed by his blaming the Whigs for nearly all the dangers of city life. One line, capitalized by the author, is particulaly famous : "Slow rises worth, by poverty depress'd."

4. *Parliamentary Debates* (c. 1740–43). In Cave's *Gentleman's Magazine.* Johnson did not expect that the reports could be accepted as giving the words of the speakers. When he found that such was the case, he refused any longer to be "accessory to the propagation of falsehood." The supposed authors, however, did not object. Two speeches written entirely by Johnson appeared in Chesterfield's collected works. A famous speech of Pitt's, in which he spoke of "the atrocious crime of being a young man," was declared unequalled in Demosthenes. Johnson coolly remarked, "That speech I wrote in a garret in Exeter Street."

5. *The Life of Savage* (1744). Published anonymously ; later included with only slight alterations in *The Lives of the Poets.* It is the study of a personality rather than of a poet, and to that fact it owes its extraordinary interest. It is also of special interest from the light it throws upon Johnson's own life in London at the time.

6. *The Plan for a Dictionary of the English Language* (1747). Addressed to Lord Chesterfield. The *Plan* states the objects of the *Dictionary :* " a dictionary by which the pronunciation of our language may be fixed, and its attainment facilitated ; by which its purity may be preserved, its use ascertained, and its duration lengthened." It was to be a dictionary, in short, not so much to give the derivation and meaning of the words as to set a standard of good usage.

7. *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749). A poem in heroic verse, 105 lines longer than *London.* It was written in imitation of Juvenal's *Tenth Satire.* Unlike *London,* it was published in Johnson's own name. The inevitable disappointment of human ambition is seen by the modern instances and by a heartfelt description of the life of a scholar. It is universally regarded as superior to *London,* being " in a graver and higher tone." The poem closes " with the assurance that happiness may be attained, if we ' apply our hearts ' to piety."

8. *Irene* (1737, 1749). A five-act tragedy in blank verse upon the Greek model. Johnson carried three acts with him when he went to London. He worked upon it during his first months in London and finished it on his visit to Lichfield in the summer of 1737. Garrick was indebted to Johnson for the prologue written in 1747 for the Drury Lane opening. He repaid this debt by putting on Johnson's *Irene* in 1749. It is really not a drama but a series of dialogues forming a moral poem. The story was not a new one. The first Sultan of the Turks, Mahomet the Great, is passionately in love with a Greek captive, Irene. Just as she " has blessed him with compliance," a conspiracy against Mahomet is detected. Its ringleader accuses Irene of complicity. At Mahomet's command, she is led away to be strangled. A few minutes too late her innocence is disclosed.

9. *The Rambler* (1750-52). A periodical essay of *The Spectator* type. One note may be added to the excellent criticism of Macaulay in ¶ 23, 24 : Johnson's didactic purpose was too obvious. Unlike Addison he did not offer his instruction in a way to attract unwilling attention ; he disdained to sugar coat his pills.

10. *Dictionary of the English Language* (1747, 1755). In two folio volumes, with Preface, History of the English Language, and

Grammar of the English Tongue. It was by no means the first English dictionary, though it was the first with the avowed purpose of standardizing the language rather than of merely recording its use. Macaulay states fairly enough the merits and defects of the work.

11. *The Idler* (1758–1760). A periodical essay similar to *The Rambler*. Unlike *The Rambler*, however, it appeared only once a week, was not an independent publication but a part of a journal, and was very much lighter in touch.

12. *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia* (1759). A short solemn novel upon the theme of *The Vanity of Human Wishes*. There is little or no story, no climax, no conclusion. It is really not a novel but a series of discussions and disquisitions upon the limitations of life — a prose *Vanity of Human Wishes*. The story is very simple. Rasselas and his sister Nekayah are confined in the "Happy Valley," where their every conceivable wish is gratified. They are not happy, however, and desire to see the outside world. Finally the prince and princess escape, attended only by her companion, Pekuah, and their teacher, an old sage, Imlac. Wandering over the land, they are forced to the conclusion that human existence in general is miserable and fruitless, and they ultimately return to the "Happy Valley" — resigned to the futility of searching for happiness and resolved to take life as they may find it. Macaulay's criticism of the novel is not altogether just. As to style, he is right: the book is to be censured for its Latinistic diction, and its involved and balanced sentence structure; it is to be praised for its grandeur and precision of language. But as to subject matter, Macaulay is not quite fair. Johnson would himself have been the first to admit the inconsistencies of time and place, but he thought objections to them "the petty cavils of petty minds." He did not object to them in Shakespeare but merely called attention to them.

13. *The Plays of William Shakespeare* (1765). Eight volumes, with a preface, notes, and an account of each play. Macaulay's criticism of this work is very poor. In the first place, the preface, according to a fairer critic than Macaulay, has "a place by itself among critical pronouncements on Shakespeare." It is famous both for its robustly honest statement of Shakespeare's faults and for its resolute ranking of Shakespeare with Homer. It is equally famous for its refutation of the dramatic unities — the classic rule that the action of a play should happen in one place, in one day, in one plot, a rule which Johnson himself followed in *Irene* but later came to recognize as fallacious. Secondly, the notes are far better than Macaulay would have us believe. He admits the excellence of those in which Johnson "had an oppor-

tunity of showing how attentively he had during many years observed human life and human nature," but he objects that Johnson made not "one happy conjectural emendation or one ingenious and satisfactory explanation of a passage which had baffled preceding commentators." The simple difficulty with these two objections is that they are quite untrue. As to the emendations, Johnson attempted, as he proudly boasted, to restore every passage which appeared to him corrupt. He worked on a very sound principle that the "reading of the ancient books is probably true," and his text was much nearer the originals than any that had appeared. But he used his sound common sense in all emendations, some of which, according to a modern authority, "find an unsuspected place in modern editions." The notes, too, are still a "firm land of common sense in a sea of ingenious fancies. . . . No edition, within its limits, is a safer guide to Shakespeare's meaning." As further proof of the utter falsity of Macaulay's criticism, one need but go to the *Variorum Edition* containing all the intelligent comments of all commentators upon the text of the plays. There one will find Johnson quoted with amazing frequency. Thirdly, Macaulay lied, as Johnson bluntly would have said, when he accused Johnson of ignorance of the other Elizabethan dramatists. The evidence Macaulay adduces to prove his assertion is purely negative — that Johnson quoted only Shakespeare and Ben Jonson in the *Dictionary*. It does not follow that Johnson knew only Shakespeare and Ben. Moreover, in the *Prospectus* of the edition, Johnson expressed the hope "that by comparing the works of Shakespeare with those of writers who lived at the same time, immediately preceded, or immediately followed him, he shall be able to ascertain his ambiguities." And the scrupulousness of Johnson's honor is too unquestioned to allow any doubt that he would misinform or mislead. Modern research has established the fact beyond question that Johnson had "a good knowledge of Elizabethan English."

14. *Taxation no Tyranny* (1775), and other political tracts. The other three were *The False Alarm* (1770), *Falkland Islands* (1771), and *The Patriot* (1774). None of these would be known to-day if Johnson had not been the author. Though Johnson was not great as a pamphleteer, he was not inferior to the other political writers. The fault lay in the type of composition as much as in the author. The greatest defect was his prejudice — another common failing of pamphleteers.

15. *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (1775). The book is less interesting than Boswell's *Tour to the Hebrides* because it is not so much a record of the actual adventures of the

ninety-four days of " vigorous exertion " as a series of thoughts and reflections upon a different civilization. His prejudice did not disturb judicious Scotchmen, as they recognized in it only the " natural prejudice of John Bull as a tourist."

16. *The Lives of the English Poets* (1779, 1781). Macaulay is largely right in his criticism of this work : it is generally admitted to be " the best of Johnson's works " ; its merits are the entertaining narratives, the shrewd and profound remarks on life and human nature, the vigorous and acute criticism, the greatly improved style. The defects arise from the author's prejudices and his deficiency in sensibility. Macaulay does not explain, however, the nature of these defects. Johnson's prejudice is in this case that in favor of the classical school, especially the heroic couplet. His deficiency in sensibility was his lack of appreciation for the love of nature and for the spontaneity of the new Romantic School. Both these defects go to make the life of Gray the worst. There are in all fifty-two lives, beginning with Cowley, extending to Gray, and including Milton, Dryden, Swift, Addison, and Pope.

CHRONOLOGICAL

JOHNSON'S LIFE	JOHNSON'S WORKS
Early Life (1709–1737)	
1709. Birth, September 18	
1712. Touched by Queen Anne	
1728. Entered Pembroke College, Oxford	1728. Translation of Pope's *Messiah*
1731. Death of his father	
1735. Marriage ; academy at Edial	1735. Translation of Lobo's *Voyage to Abyssinia*
1737. Migration to London	
Struggle for Recognition (1737–1747)	
	1738. *London*, the poem
	1740–1743. *Parliamentary Debates*
	1744. *Life of Savage*
Recognition and Literary Activity (1747–1762)	
	1747. *Plan for a Dictionary*
	1749. *Vanity of Human Wishes*
	Production of *Irene*
1752. Death of his wife	1750–1752. *The Rambler*
1755. Letter to Chesterfield	1755. *The Dictionary*
	1758–1760. *The Idler*
1759. Death of his mother	1759. *Rasselas*
Affluence and Literary Inactivity (1762–1773)	
1762. Pensioned	
1763. Introduction to Boswell	
1764. Founding of *The Club*	
1765. L.L. D. from Dublin Introduction to Thrales	1765. *Edition of Shakespeare*
Resumption of Literary Activity (1773–1781)	
1773. Tour of Scotland	1775. *Journey to the Western Islands*
1775. D.C. L., Oxford	*Taxation no Tyranny*
	1779. *Lives of the Poets* in part
	1781. *Lives of the Poets* completed
Last Days and Succeeding Years (1781–1791)	
1784. Mrs. Thrale's second marriage	
1784. Death, December 13	

TABLE

CONTEMPORARY HISTORY	CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE
Early Life (1709–1737)	
1710. Trial of Sacheverell	
1714. Death of Queen Anne and accession of George I	1711–1713. *The Spectator*
	1726. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*
1721–1742. Domination of Walpole	1728. Pope's *Dunciad*
	1731. *Gentleman's Magazine* founded
1727. Accession of George II	
Struggle for Recognition (1737–1747)	
1746. Chesterfield, Secretary of State	1740. Richardson's *Pamela*
Recognition and Literary Activity (1747–1762)	
	1749. Fielding's *Tom Jones*
	1751. Gray's *Elegy*
1760. Accession of George III	
1762. Ministry of Bute	1762. Churchill's *The Ghost*
Affluence and Literary Inactivity (1762–1773)	
	1764. Goldsmith's *Traveller*
	1766. Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*
Resumption of Literary Activity (1773–1781)	
	1773. Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*
1775. Battle of Lexington	1775. Burke's *Speech on Conciliation*
1776. Declaration of Independence	1776–1788. Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of Roman Empire*
Last Days and Succeeding Years (1781–1791)	
1783. Peace with America	1785. Boswell's *Tour to the Hebrides*
	1786. Mrs. Piozzi's *Anecdotes of Johnson*
	1791. Boswell's *Life of Johnson*

APPENDIX C

THE MEETING OF DR. JOHNSON AND WILKES

from Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*

I am now to record a very curious incident in Dr. Johnson's life, which fell under my own observation ; of which *pars magna fui*, and which I am persuaded will, with the liberal-minded, be much to his credit.

My desire of being acquainted with celebrated men of every description, had made me, much about the same time, obtain an introduction to Dr. Samuel Johnson and to John Wilkes, Esq. Two men more different could perhaps not be selected out of all mankind. They had even attacked one another with some asperity in their writings ; yet I lived in habits of friendship with both. I could fully relish the excellence of each ; for I have ever delighted in that intellectual chymistry which can separate good qualities from evil in the same person.

Sir John Pringle, " mine own friend and my Father's friend," between whom and Dr. Johnson I in vain wished to establish an acquaintance, as I respected and lived in intimacy with both of them, observed to me once, very ingeniously, " It is not in friendship as in mathematicks, where two things, each equal to a third, are equal between themselves. You agree with Johnson as a middle quality, and you agree with me as a middle quality ; but Johnson and I should not agree." Sir John was not sufficiently flexible ; so I desisted ; knowing, indeed, that the repulsion was equally strong on the part of Johnson ; who, I know not from what cause, unless his being a Scotchman, had formed a very erroneous opinion of Sir John. But I conceived an irresistible wish, if possible, to bring Dr. Johnson and Mr. Wilkes together. How to manage it, was a nice and difficult matter.

My worthy booksellers and friends, Messieurs Dilly in the Poultry, at whose hospitable and well-covered table I have seen a greater number of literary men, than at any other, except that of Sir Joshua Reynolds, had invited me to meet Mr. Wilkes and some more gentlemen, on Wednesday, May 15. " Pray (said I,) let us have Dr. Johnson." — " What with Mr. Wilkes ? not for the world, (said Mr. Edward Dilly ;) Dr. Johnson would never forgive me." — " Come, (said I,) if you'll let me negociate for you, I will be answerable that all shall go well." DILLY. " Nay, if you will take it upon you, I am sure I shall be very happy to see them both here."

Notwithstanding the high veneration which I entertained for Dr. Johnson, I was sensible that he was sometimes a little actuated by the spirit of contradiction, and by means of that I hoped I should gain my point. I was persuaded that if I had come upon him with a direct proposal, "Sir, will you dine in company with Jack Wilkes?" he would have flown into a passion, and would probably have answered, "Dine with Jack Wilkes, Sir! I'd as soon dine with Jack Ketch."[1] I therefore, while we were sitting quietly by ourselves at his house in an evening took occasion to open my plan thus: — "Mr. Dilly, Sir, sends his respectful compliments to you, and would be happy if you would do him the honour to dine with him on Wednesday next along with me, as I must soon go to Scotland." JOHNSON. "Sir, I am obliged to Mr. Dilly. I will wait upon him —" BOSWELL. "Provided, Sir, I suppose, that the company which he is to have, is agreeable to you." JOHNSON. "What do you mean, Sir? What do you take me for? Do you think I am so ignorant of the world, as to imagine that I am to prescribe to a gentleman what company he is to have at his table?" BOSWELL. "I beg your pardon, Sir, for wishing to prevent you from meeting people whom you might not like. Perhaps he may have some of what he calls his patriotick friends with him." JOHNSON. "Well, Sir, and what then? What care *I* for his *patriotick friends?* Poh!" BOSWELL. "I should not be surprized to find Jack Wilkes there." JOHNSON. "And if Jack Wilkes *should* be there, what is that to *me*, Sir? My dear friend, let us have no more of this. I am sorry to be angry with you; but really it is treating me strangely to talk to me as if I could not meet any company whatever, occasionally." BOSWELL. "Pray, forgive me, Sir: I meant well. But you shall meet whoever comes, for me." Thus I secured him, and told Dilly that he would find him very well pleased to be one of his guests on the day appointed.

Upon the much-expected Wednesday, I called on him about half an hour before dinner, as I often did when we were to dine out together, to see that he was ready in time, and to accompany him. I found him buffeting his books, as upon a former occasion, covered with dust, and making no preparation for going abroad. "How is this, Sir? (said I). Don't you recollect that you are to dine at Mr. Dilly's?" JOHNSON. "Sir, I did not think of going to Dilly's: it went out of my head. I have ordered dinner at home with Mrs. Williams." BOSWELL. "But, my dear Sir, you know you were engaged to Mr. Dilly, and I told him so. He will

[1] This has been circulated as if actually said by Johnson; when the truth is, it was only *supposed* by me. — B.

expect you, and will be much disappointed if you don't come." JOHNSON. "You must talk to Mrs. Williams about this."

Here was a sad dilemma. I feared that what I was so confident I had secured, would yet be frustrated. He had accustomed himself to shew Mrs. Williams such a degree of humane attention, as frequently imposed some restraint upon him; and I knew that if she should be obstinate, he would not stir. I hastened down stairs to the blind lady's room, and told her I was in great uneasiness, for Dr. Johnson had engaged to me to dine this day at Mr. Dilly's, but that he had told me he had forgotten his engagement, and had ordered dinner at home. "Yes, Sir, (said she, pretty peevishly,) Dr. Johnson is to dine at home." — "Madam, (said I,) his respect for you is such, that I know he will not leave you, unless you absolutely desire it. But as you have so much of his company. I hope you will be good enough to forego it for a day: as Mr. Dilly is a very worthy man, has frequently had agreeable parties at his house for Dr. Johnson, and will be vexed if the Doctor neglects him to-day. And then, Madam, be pleased to consider my situation; I carried the message, and I assured Mr. Dilly that Dr. Johnson was to come, and no doubt he has made a dinner, and invited a company, and boasted of the honour he expected to have. I shall be quite disgraced if the Doctor is not there." She gradually softened to my solicitations, which were certainly as earnest as most entreaties to ladies upon any occasion, and was graciously pleased to empower me to tell Dr. Johnson, "That all things considered, she thought he should certainly go." I flew back to him, still in dust, and careless of what should be the event, "indifferent in his choice to go or stay;" but as soon as I had announced to him Mrs. Williams's consent, he roared, "Frank, a clean shirt," and was very soon drest. When I had him fairly seated in a hackney-coach with me, I exulted as much as a fortune-hunter who has got an heiress into a post-chaise with him to set out for Gretna-Green.

When we entered Mr. Dilly's drawing-room, he found himself in the midst of a company he did not know. I kept myself snug and silent, watching how he would conduct himself. I observed him whispering to Mr. Dilly, "Who is that gentleman, sir?" — "Mr. Arthur Lee." — JOHNSON. "Too, too, too," (under his breath,) which was one of his habitual mutterings. Mr. Arthur Lee could not but be very obnoxious to Johnson, for he was not only a *patriot*, but an *American*. He was afterwards minister from the United States at the court of Madrid. "And who is the gentleman in lace?" — "Mr. Wilkes, Sir." This information confounded him still more; he had some difficulty to restrain himself, and taking up a book, sat down upon a window-seat and

read, or at least kept his eye upon it intently for some time, till he composed himself. His feelings, I dare say, were aukward enough. But he no doubt recollected his having rated me for supposing that he could be at all disconcerted by any company, and he, therefore, resolutely set himself to behave quite as an easy man of the world, who could adapt himself at once to the disposition and manners of those whom he might chance to meet.

The cheering sound of "Dinner is upon the table," dissolved his reverie, and we *all* sat down without any sympton of ill humour. There were present, beside Mr. Wilkes, and Mr. Arthur Lee, who was an old companion of mine when he studied physick at Edinburgh, Mr. (now Sir John) Miller, Dr. Lettsom, and Mr. Slater, the druggist. Mr. Wilkes placed himself next to Dr. Johnson, and behaved to him with so much attention and politeness, that he gained upon him insensibly. No man eat more heartily than Johnson, or loved better what was nice and delicate. Mr. Wilkes was very assiduous in helping him to some fine veal. "Pray give me leave, Sir; — It is better here — A little of the brown — Some fat, Sir — A little of the stuffing — Some gravy — Let me have the pleasure of giving you some butter — Allow me to recommend a squeeze of this orange; — or the lemon, perhaps, may have more zest." — "Sir, Sir, I am obliged to you, Sir," cried Johnson, bowing, and turning his head to him with a look for some time of "surly virtue," [1] but, in a short while, of complacency.

APPENDIX D

ASSIGNMENTS FOR STUDYING THE ESSAY

Lesson 1

a. Read §§ 1–5 of the Introduction.

b. Summarize each paragraph in a single complete sentence. Arrange these topics as a sentence outline under the general heading, *The Essay as a Form of Literature.*

c. Be prepared to answer the following questions: (1) What were the circumstances of the origin of the modern essay? (2) How did Bacon's essays differ from Montaigne's? (3) What was the character of the English essay in the seventeenth century? (4) What change took place in the nature of the English essay in the eighteenth century? (5) How did the English essay

[1] Johnson's "London, a Poem," v. 145.

develop in the nineteenth century ? (6) How are essays classified according to form ? (7) How are Macaulay's essays on Johnson to be classified according to form ? (8) How are essays classified according to subject matter and how would you so classify Macaulay's essays on Johnson ? (9) What is it necessary to know to understand and to appreciate fully an essay ? Why ?

Lesson 2

a. Read §§ 6–18 of the Introduction.

b. Summarize as in Lesson 1 and arrange the topics as a sentence outline under the heading *The Life of Macaulay.*

c. Questions : (1) In what ways was Macaulay a typical Victorian ? (2) What is meant by *precocity* ? Illustrate by examples from Macaulay's life. (3) What university did Macaulay attend and what marked successes and failure did he have ? (4) What two striking mental traits made possible the accumulation of facts he was famous for ? (5) What was Macaulay's first essay and what was its reception ? (6) How did he get drawn into politics ? (7) What led to his India appointment and why did he feel constrained to accept it ? (8) What was his greatest work in India ? (9) Upon his return how did he spend the following years ? (10) What was his method of composition in writing the history ?

Lesson 3

a. Read §§ 19–29 of the Introduction.

b. Summarize and outline the heading *Macaulay the Man.*

c. Questions : (1) What picture have you in your mind of Macaulay's appearance ? (2) What were his physical characteristics ? (3) How did he indulge his love of society ? (4) What were his feelings toward his sisters ? (5) What were his two outstanding virtues ? Give an example of each. (6) What famous remark was made concerning Macaulay's self-confidence ? (7) What was Macaulay's attitude toward women and what is your guess as to its cause ? (8) What was his attitude toward democracy and how do you explain that attitude ? (9) What were the differences between the Whigs and the Tories ? (10) What was the nature of Macaulay's Whiggism and how did it affect his judgment ?

Lesson 4

a. Read §§ 30–41 of the Introduction.

b. Summarize and outline under the headings *Macaulay's Position in Literature* and *Macaulay's Style.*

c. Questions : (1) What is the title of Macaulay's volume of poems and what is the best-known poem in it ? (2) What was Macaulay's method of preparing a speech ? (3) What is the chief merit of Macaulay's *History* ? (4) What is its chief weakness ? (5) For what periodical did Macaulay write most of his essays and how were they received by the public ? (6) What was Macaulay's own attitude toward his essays ? (7) How did Macaulay get clearness in his sentences ? (8) In his paragraphs ? (9) What is meant by concreteness and how did Macaulay attain it ? (10) By what rhetorical device in particular did Macaulay gain force ?

LESSON 5

a. Read §§ 42–51 of the Introduction.

b. Summarize and outline under the heading *Background of Macaulay's Life of Johnson.*

c. Questions : (1) What is the outstanding characteristic of Macaulay's first essay on Johnson ? (2) How does the essay published in this volume compare with the early essay ? (3) What is the theme, the underlying purpose or motive, of the *Life of Johnson* ? (4) What difference and what striking point of similarity existed between the London of Johnson's time and that of Addison's ? (5) What effect had the political conditions of Johnson's time upon the fortunes of men of letters ? (6) What is meant by *romantic* and *classic* in literature ? (7) What was Johnson's chief defect as critic, and what was the source of it ? (8) Upon what does Johnson's fame to-day rest ? (9) Do you think Boswell was a great biographer because of or in spite of his weaknesses ? (10) What was Boswell's outstanding trait of character ?

The Content of the Essay

LESSON 6

a. Read ¶¶ 1–9 of the essay.

b. Summarize each paragraph into a single complete sentence. (Three sentences may be used for the first paragraph.) Arrange these sentences in an outline under the heading, *Introduction — Johnson's Early Life.*

LESSON 7

a. Read ¶¶ 10–17.

b. Summarize as in Lesson 6 and arrange the sentences in outline form under the heading, *Johnson's Struggles in London to Gain Recognition.*

LESSON 8

a. Read ¶¶ 18–33.

b. Summarize and outline under the heading, *Johnson's Recognition and Early Literary Career in London.*

LESSON 9

a. Read ¶¶ 34–40.

b. Summarize and outline under the heading, *Johnson's Affluence and Period of Little Literary Activity.*

LESSON 10

a. Read ¶¶ 41–52.

b. Summarize and outline under the headings : (1) *Johnson's Later Literary Career* and (2) *His Last Years.*

Subject Matter of the Essay and Allusions

LESSON 11

a. Review ¶¶ 1–9 and study the notes on those paragraphs.

b. Questions : ¶1. (1) Do you think the long first paragraph a unit ? If so, what is the topic of it ? If not, what are the topics covered in it ? (2) Do you think that most young people would have learned anything by a method of reading like Johnson's ? Why did it succeed with him ? ¶ 2. (3) How does Macaulay secure coherence between the first and second paragraphs ? See Introduction, § 37. (4) How does Oxford differ from an American university ? (5) Why should Macrobius have appealed to Johnson — because of Johnson's peculiar abilities or because of the nature of Macrobius's work ? ¶ 3. (6) What device of Macaulay's to gain force is notable in ¶ 3 ? Give examples. (7) What weakness of Macaulay's is evident in the sentences beginning *The needy scholar* and *In every mutiny* ? See Introduction, § 35. ¶ 4. (8) How long did Johnson actually remain at Oxford ? ¶ 5. (9) Can you justify Macaulay's dealing in this one paragraph with the effect of Johnson's privations in general upon his life? See Introduction, § 44, and ¶ 12 of the essay. ¶ 6. (10) What were Johnson's early efforts to earn a living ? ¶ 7. (11) What is gained by and what is the danger in Macaulay's mention of the Queensberrys and Lepels ? (12) What misrepresentations occur in this paragraph and what possible explanations for them can you imagine ? § 35 and note.

c. Explain *Jacobite, royal touch, Augustan delicacy of taste, public schools, restorers of learning, either university, Virgilian, grammar school, ecclesiastical court.*

d. Look up *hypochondriac, torpid, tawdry* in an unabridged dictionary — the last word for its interesting derivation.

Lesson 12

a. Review ¶¶ 10–17 and study the notes on those paragraphs.

b. Questions : ¶ 10. (1) What writers can you name in the preceding generation who flourished by the patronage of the great ? What writers in the generation following his death who flourished by the patronage of the public ? What exception was there to Macaulay's rule that literature was not a profitable occupation ? (2) How does Macaulay hold the attention in the sentence describing Fielding's poverty ? ¶ 11. (3) Where and under what circumstances had Johnson become acquainted with Hervey ? ¶ 12. (4) Do you think Johnson's gluttony and insolence excusable ? (5) What characteristics of Macaulay's style does this paragraph illustrate ? ¶ 13. (6) What defence is there for Johnson's having deceived his readers in the *Debates of the Senate of Lilliput* ? (7) What is to be said in defence of and against the historical and literary illusions of this paragraph ? ¶ 14. (8) What two things prompted Johnson to write his poem *London* ? ¶ 16. (9) Name and describe Johnson's associates during his early years in London. How do you explain a man of his high morals associating with several of them ? (10) Find examples in this paragraph of balanced structure. What is the danger in the habitual use of it and does Macaulay fall into this danger ?

c. Explain *Fielding, Drury Lane, subterranean ordinaries and à la mode beef shops, Senate of Lilliput, Capulets and Montagues, Blues of the Roman Circus against the Greens, Sacheverell, Tom Tempest, ship money, Roundheads, Pope, Horace, Juvenal, bookseller's hack, blue ribands, Covent Garden, Grub Street.*

Lesson 13

a. Review ¶¶ 18–33 and study the notes on them.

b. Questions : ¶ 18. (1) How much — in purchasing power — would 1500 guineas be equivalent to now ? ¶ 19. (2) How do you account for the fact that Johnson, in whom pride was a dominant trait, sought the favor of Chesterfield, and with whom do you sympathize the more ? ¶ 21. (3) How do you explain the shortness of this paragraph ? ¶ 22. (4) What devices do you find in this paragraph by which Macaulay secured coherence between the paragraphs and the force of this one ? (5) What is the distinction between heroic and blank verse ? ¶ 25. (6) What, according to Macaulay, are the merits and defects of

The Rambler? ¶ 27. (7) Why is Johnson's Letter to Chesterfield called "the declaration of independence of English letters"? (8) It is not often that Macaulay makes a slip in coherence, but there is a misplaced modifier in the last sentence of this paragraph. What is the error and how may it be corrected? ¶ 28. (9) What, according to Macaulay, are the merits and the defects of the *Dictionary*? ¶ 32 and ¶ 33. (10) What are the merits and the defects of *Rasselas*?

c. Explain *Earl of Chesterfield, Wolsey, Sejanus, Demosthenes, Cicero, Hannibal, Charles, Addison, Richardson, Lady Mary, spunging houses, Miss Lydia Languish, Newton, Hector, Aristotle, the oracle of Delphi.*

d. Look up in a dictionary *prospectus, patronage, etymologist.*

Lesson 14

a. Review ¶¶ 34–40 and study the notes.

b. Questions: ¶ 36. (1) Do you think Churchill justified in his attack upon Johnson for credulity in the Cock Lane Ghost affair and for dishonesty in the delay in publishing the edition of *Shakespeare*? ¶ 37. (2) What merits does Macaulay find in Johnson's edition of *Shakespeare*? (3) What defects? To what extent in your opinion are these defects real? ¶ 38. (4) To what does Macaulay attribute Johnson's powers of conversation — "his colloquial talents"? (5) Boswell once suggested that the members of *The Club* could establish a very great college. To what extent was this true? ¶ 39. (6) To what extent is Macaulay unfair to Boswell in this paragraph and how do you explain this unfairness? ¶ 40. (7) How does the reminder of Johnson's eccentricities remind us of the theme of the essay? Cf. Introduction, p. 46. (8) What objections are there to Macaulay's including a description of Johnson's "Fleet Street Menagerie" in the same paragraph with the account of the Thrales? Do you see any justification for doing so? (9) Who were the members of Johnson's London household?

c. Explain *Bute, Polonius, Ben, Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, Marlowe, Royal Academy, Goldsmith, Reynolds, Burke, Garrick, Wilkes, Whitefield, Buck and Maccaroni, Bath.*

d. Look up *conjectural, emendation, pompous, triads, casuistry.*

Lesson 15

a. Review ¶¶ 41–52 and study the notes.

b. Questions: ¶ 41. (1) What kind of reception did Johnson receive on his tour of Scotland, and what effect did it have upon

his prejudices against the Scotch? ¶ 43. (2) Do you agree with the statement "that the place of books in the public estimation is fixed, not by what is written about them, but by what is written in them"? What about the modern practice of advertising? (3) Why did Johnson think it unwise "to wrangle with detractors whose works are certain to die"? ¶ 44. (4) What inference do you make from *Taxation No Tyranny* as to the influence of Johnson's prejudices upon his judgment? Does his attitude toward America affect your opinion of him as man or writer? ¶ 45. (5) What explanation is there for Johnson's failure as a political writer? ¶ 47, ¶ 48. (6) What are the merits and the defects of *The Lives of the Poets*? (7) How do you account for the difference in style between the *Life of Savage* and the other *Lives*? ¶ 49. (8) Why should the *Life of Gray* have been the worst? ¶ 51. (9) Why do you suppose Macaulay was so unfair to Mrs. Thrale in this paragraph? See Introduction, p. 29. ¶ 53. (10) Do you agree that Johnson was "both a great and a good man"? Prove your contention by reference to specific facts.

c. Explain *Hebrides, Fingal, Sheridan, wits of Button, Frances Burney, Westminster Abbey, anfractuosities.*

d. Look up *sophistry, sarcasm, invective, apophthegm.*

Review of Macaulay's Style

Lesson 16

a. Review §§ 25–40 of Introduction.

b. Find and list examples (the number to be fixed by the teacher): (1) of coherence between paragraphs secured by transitional phrases or clauses placed at the beginning of a paragraph; (2) of coherence between paragraphs secured by transitional phrases or clauses placed at the end of a paragraph; (3) of coherence secured by words or phrases showing the chronological sequence; (4) of unity of paragraphs secured by a topic sentence standing at the beginning of a paragraph; (5) of unity of paragraphs secured by a topic sentence standing at the end of a paragraph; (6) of unity of paragraphs secured by a topic sentence within the paragraph; (7) of paragraphs lacking unity — containing more than one topic; (8) of force secured by the use of the concrete, *i.e.*, "raw steaks cut from living cows"; (9) of force secured by balance; (10) of exaggeration especially in the free use of superlatives; (11) of careless misstatements.

Review of Johnson's Works

LESSON 17

a. Memorize the list of works in Appendix — in chronological order and get the dates of each.

b. Questions : (1) What did Pope say of Johnson's translation into Latin of his *Messiah* ? (2) What later use did Johnson make of the knowledge he gained in translating Lobo's *Voyage to Abyssinia* ? (3) What great defect appears in the *Parliamentary Debates* ? (4) What were the merits and defects of the *Life of Savage* ? (5) What is the subject of the poem *London* ? (6) What is the subject of the poem *The Vanity of Human Wishes* ? (7) What is the story of *Irene* and what are the merits and defects of the tragedy ? (8) What are the merits and defects of *The Rambler* and how does it compare with *The Spectator* ? (9) What are the merits and defects of the *Dictionary* ? (10) How does *The Idler* compare with *The Rambler* ? (11) What is the story of *Rasselas* and what are the merits and defects of it as a piece of fiction ? (12) What are the circumstances of the publication of Johnson's edition of Shakespeare ? What according to Macaulay are the merits and defects of the edition and to what extent is Macaulay wrong ? (13) What are the characteristics of Johnson's *Journey to the Western Islands* ? (14) Why was *Taxation No Tyranny* a failure ? (15) What are the merits, defects, and inequalities of *The Lives of the English Poets* ?

GENERAL REVIEW QUESTIONS AND THEME TOPICS — SELECTED FROM COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS

LESSONS 18 ff.

NOTE

a. The answers to these questions should be written out if possible.

b. Attention should be called to the College Entrance Examination Board's directions : " No paper will be considered satisfactory if seriously defective in grammar, spelling, or punctuation."

(*c*) Neatness and good penmanship are also of great importance. See the Board's excellent pamphlet of *Suggestions and Aids for College Candidates in English* (Document No. 100, July 15, 1921) : " The candidate should write plainly and neatly, for the readers

are only human, and are irritated by undecipherable manuscript. They are correspondingly pleased at evident attempts at neatness." [1]

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS

(Arranged Alphabetically by Institutions)

1. Give the main facts of Dr. Johnson's life. (Amherst)
2. Discuss the moral qualities and power to fight the battle of life that were characteristic of Samuel Johnson. (Amherst)
3. What was Dr. Johnson's most important trait of character? What influence did it have on his work? How does it contribute to his greatness? (Amherst)
4. Write a character sketch of Samuel Johnson. Have you any reason to think Macaulay's picture . . . untrustworthy in any respect? (Amherst)
5. What famous men were personal friends of Dr. Johnson, and for what were they famous? (College Entrance Examination Board)
6. Show how Johnson's inherited tendencies and education affected his success. Did he succeed in spite of them or because of them? (Board)
7. "Never since literature became a calling in England had it been a less gainful calling than at the time when Johnson took up his residence in London." How does Macaulay account for this condition? How did the situation affect Johnson? (Board)
8. Dr. Johnson's ability as a writer of literary biography. (Board)
9. From your study of Macaulay's essay explain in what ways "the memory of Johnson keeps many of his works alive." (Board)
10. Name and briefly characterize four works of Samuel John son, each representing a different kind of composition. (Board)
11. What, according to Macaulay, was Johnson's chief weakness as a lexicographer? (Board)
12. In what respects did Macaulay think Johnson ill-qualified to bring out an edition of Shakespeare? (Board)
13. After your reading of this essay, what should you say of Macaulay as a critic of men and of literature? (Board)
14. Mention three literary qualities of Johnson and three of Macaulay, as shown by Macaulay's *Life of Johnson*, and comment

[1] No student should be allowed to take any college entrance examination in English without having mastered this pamphlet.

in detail, and by reference to the work, on any one of these six qualities. (Board)

15. Write on *one* of the following topics : (*a*) Handicaps which make Johnson's success remarkable. (*b*) Macaulay's skill as a writer. (Board)

16. Give some account of Johnson's friends, and explain their admiration of him and his influence among them. (Board)

17. The Literary Club meets at Sir Joshua's. (Board)

18. What peculiarities of person and manners and what infirmities of character interfered with Johnson's happiness and success in life ? (Bowdoin)

19. What are the most outstanding characteristics of Johnson, the man, and Johnson, the writer ? (Bowdoin)

20. Describe as fully and as definitely as you can the style (not the thought) of Macaulay. (Brown)

21. Mention three of Johnson's literary qualities, and cite particular instances where they are shown. (Brown)

22. Why is Macaulay's *Life of Johnson* interesting ? (Brown)

23. Discuss Johnson's influence on the other literary men of his time. (Dartmouth)

24. Summarize the chief characteristics of Johnson as given by Macaulay. (Dartmouth)

25. Name the chief works of Johnson. Which does Macaulay consider the best and why ? (Dartmouth)

26. What were Johnson's outstanding virtues ? (Dartmouth)

27. How did Johnson's habits of life change after he received the pension from Lord Bute ? (Dartmouth)

28. Give a brief character sketch of Savage. (Dartmouth)

29. What is meant by " patronage of the great " ? How was Johnson affected by it or by the lack of it ? (Dartmouth)

30. What literary qualities are implied by the terms *Johnsonian* and *Macaulayan* ? (Harvard, adapted)

31. How do you explain the power and charm of Johnson's conversation ? (W. P. I.)

32. What was Macaulay's theory of the life of Dr. Johnson ? Show how Macaulay has this theory in mind at all times. (W. P. I.)

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dial -

Warburton - bishop who praised Rambler

Horne Tooke - enemy of Johnson who praised dictionary

Mrs Piozzi - Mrs. Thrale after second marriage